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THE CHANNINGS.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," AND "DANESBURY HOUSE."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the schoolboy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1862.

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THE CHANNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

MR. BUTTERBY.

The cathedral clock of Helstonleigh was striking eight, and the postman was going his rounds through the Boundaries. Formerly, nothing so common as a regular postman, when on duty, was admitted within the pale of that exclusive place. The Boundaries, chiefly occupied by the higher order of the clergy, did not condescend to have its letters delivered in the ordinary way, and by the ordinary hands. It was the custom for the postman to take them to the Boundary-gate, and there put them into the porter's great box, just as if he had been posting letters at the town post-office; and the porter forthwith delivered them at their several destinations. The late porter, however, had grown with years half blind and wholly stupid. Some letters he dropped; some he

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lost; some he delivered at wrong houses; some, he persisted in declaring, when questioned, had never been delivered to *him*. In short, the mistakes and confusion were incessant; so, the porter was exonerated from that portion of his duty, and the postman entered upon it. There was a fresh porter now, but the old custom had not been resumed.

Ring—ring—ring—ring—for one peculiarity of the Boundaries was, that most of its doors possessed no knockers, only bells—on he went, the man, on this morning, leaving letters nearly everywhere. At length he came to Mr. Galloway's, and rang there a peal that it is the delight of a postman to ring; but when the door was opened, he delivered in only one letter and a newspaper. The business letters were generally directed to the office.

Mr. Galloway was half-way through his breakfast. He was no sluggard, and he liked to devote the whole hour, from eight to nine, to his breakfast and his *Times*. Occasionally, as on this morning, he would sit down before eight, so as to get nearly through his breakfast before the postman came. His servants knew by experience that, when this happened, he was expecting something unusual by the post.

His man came in. He laid the letter and the

newspaper by his master's side. Mr. Galloway tore open the *Times*, gave one glance at the price of funds and the money article, and then put the paper away and took up the letter.

The latter was from his cousin, Mr. Robert Galloway. It contained, besides the writing, the envelope in which Mr. Galloway had enclosed the 20*l.* note. 'You perceive,' wrote Mr. Robert, 'that the seal had not been tampered with. It is perfectly intact. Hence I infer that you must be in error in supposing you put the note into the letter.'

Mr. Galloway examined the envelope closely. His cousin had not broken the seal in opening the letter, but had *cut* the paper above it. He was a methodical man in trifles, Mr. Robert Galloway, and generally did cut his envelopes open. It had been all the better for him had he learnt to be methodical with his money.

'Yes; it is as Robert says,' soliloquised Mr. Galloway. 'The seal has not been touched since it went out of my hands; therefore the note must have been extracted from the letter previously. Now, who did it?'

He sat—his elbow on the breakfast table, his chin in his hand, and the envelope lying before him. Apparently, he was studying it minutely; in reality he was lost in thought. 'It's just like

the work of a conjuror!' he presently exclaimed. 'Not a strange soul near the place, that I can find out, and yet the bank-note vanishes out of the letter! Notes don't vanish without hands, and I'll do as I said yesterday—consult the police. If anybody can come to the bottom of it, it's Butterby. Had the seal been broken, I should have given it in charge to the post-office to ferret out; the crime would have lain with them, and so must the discovery. As it is, the business is mine.'

He wrote a line rapidly in pencil, folded, called in his man-servant, and dispatched him with it to the police-station. The station was very near; it was situated on the other side the Cathedral, midway between that edifice and the town-hall. In ten minutes after the servant had left the house, Mr. Butterby was on his road to it.

Mr. Butterby puzzled Helstonleigh. He was not an inspector, he was not a sergeant, he was not a common officer, and he was never seen in official dress. Who was Mr. Butterby? Helstonleigh wondered. That he had a great deal to do with the police, was one of their staff, and received his pay, was certain; but, what his standing might be, and what his peculiar line of duty, they could not tell. Sometimes he was absent from Helstonleigh for months at a time, probably puzzling other towns. Mr. Galloway would have told you he was a

detective; but perhaps Mr. Galloway's grounds for the assertion existed but in his own opinion. For convenience' sake we will call him the detective; remembering, however, that we have no warranty for it.

Mr. Butterby came forward, a spare, pale man, of middle height, his eyes deeply set in his head, and his nose turned up to the skies. He was of silent habit; probably, of a silent nature.

Mr. Galloway recited the circumstances of his loss. The detective sat near, his hands upon his knees, his head bent, and his eyes cast upon the floor. He did not interrupt the story by a single word. When it was ended, he took up the envelope, and examined it in equal silence; examined it with ridiculous minuteness, Mr. Galloway thought, for he poked, and peered, and touched it everywhere. He held it up to the light, he studied the post-marks, he gazed at the seal through an odd-looking little glass that he took from his waistcoat pocket, he particularly criticised the folds, he drew his fingers along its edges, he actually smelt it—all in silence, and with a countenance entirely impassive.

'Have you the number of the note?' was his first question.

'No,' said Mr. Galloway.

He looked up at this: the thought may have

struck him, that, not to take the number of a bank-note, sent by post, betrayed some carelessness for a man of business. Mr. Galloway, at least, inferred this to have caused the look, and answered it.

'Of course I am in the habit of taking their numbers; I don't know that I ever did such a thing before, as send a bank-note away without it. I had an appointment, as I tell you, at the other end of the town for a quarter before three; it was of importance, and, when I heard the college strike out the three quarters—the very hour I ought to have been there—I hurriedly put the note inside the folds of the letter, without waiting to take the number. It was not that I forgot to do so, but that I would not spare the time.'

'Have you any means of ascertaining the number, by tracing the note back to whence it may have come into your possession?' was the next question.

Mr. Galloway was obliged to confess that he had not. 'Bank-notes are so frequently paid me from different quarters,' he remarked. 'Yesterday, for instance, a farmer, renting under the dean and chapter, came in and paid me his half-year's rent. Another, holding the lease of a public-house in the town, renewed two lives which had dropped; it was Beard, of the Barley Mow. Now,

both these men paid in notes, tens and fives, and they lie together now in my cash drawer; but I could not tell you which particular notes came from each man—no, not if you paid me the worth of the whole to do it. Neither could I tell whence I had the note which I put into the letter.'

'In this way, if a note should turn out to be bad, you could not return it to its owner.'

'I never took a bad note in my life,' said Mr. Galloway, speaking impulsively. 'There's not a better judge of notes than myself in the kingdom; and Jenkins is as good.'

Another silence. Mr. Butterby remained in the same attitude, his head and eyes bent. 'Have you told me all the particulars?' he presently asked.

'I think so. All that I remember.'

'Then allow me to go over them aloud,' returned the detective; 'and, if I make any mistake or omission, have the goodness to correct me:—On Friday last you took a 20*l.* note out of your cash drawer, not taking or knowing its number. This note you put within the folds of a letter, and placed both in an envelope, and fastened the envelope down, your two clerks, Channing and Yorke, being present. You then went out, leaving the letter upon one of the desks. As you left, Hamish Channing came in. Immediately following upon

that, Yorke went out, leaving the brothers alone. Arthur departed to attend college, Hamish remaining in the office. Arthur Channing soon returned, finding there was no necessity for him to stay in the cathedral; upon which Hamish left. Arthur Channing remained alone for more than an hour, nobody calling or entering the office during that period. You then returned yourself; found the letter in the same state, apparently, in which you had left it, and you sealed it, and sent Arthur Channing with it to the post-office. These are the brief facts, so far as you are cognisant of them, and as they have been related to you?'

'They are,' replied Mr. Galloway. 'I should have mentioned that Arthur Channing carried the letter into my private room before he quitted the office for college.'

'Locking the door?'

'Oh dear no! Closing the door, no doubt, but not locking it. It would have been unusual to do so.'

'Jenkins was away,' observed the detective in a tone of abstraction, which told he was holding self-soliloquy, rather than addressing his companion. Mr. Galloway rather fired at the remark, taking it in a light different from that in which it was spoken.

'Jenkins was at home at the time, confined to

his bed; and, had he not been, I would answer for Jenkins' honesty as I would for my own. Can you see any possible solution of the mystery?'

'A very possible one,' was the dry answer. 'There is no doubt whatever upon my mind, that the theft was committed by Arthur Channing.'

Mr. Galloway started up with an exclamation of surprise, mingled with anger. Standing within the room was his nephew Mark. The time had gone on to nine, the hour of release from school; and, on running past Mr. Galloway's with the rest of the boys, Mark had dutifully called in. Mark and his brothers were particularly fond of calling in, for their uncle was not stingy with his sixpences, and they were always on the look-out. Mr. Mark did not get a sixpence this time.

'How dare you intrude upon me in this surreptitious way, sir? Don't you see I am engaged? I will have you knock at my room door before you enter. Take yourself off again, if you please!'

Mark, with a word of deprecation, went off, his ears pricking with the sentence he had heard from the detective—Arthur Channing the thief!

Mr. Galloway turned again to the officer. He resented the imputation. 'The Channings are altogether above suspicion, from the father downwards,' he remonstrated. 'Were Arthur Chan-

ning dishonestly inclined, he has had the opportunity to rob me long before this.'

'Persons of hitherto honourable conduct, honest by nature and by habit, have succumbed under sudden temptation or pressing need,' was the answer.

'Arthur Channing is in no pressing need. He is not hard up for money.'

A smile actually curled the detective's stoical lip. 'A great many more young men are hard up for money than they let appear on the surface. The Channings are in what may be called difficulty, through the failure of their Chancery suit, and the lad must have yielded to temptation.'

Mr. Galloway could not be brought to see it. 'You may as well set on and suspect Hamish,' he resentfully said. 'He was equally alone with the letter.'

'No,' was the answer of the keen officer. 'Hamish Channing is in a responsible position; he would not be likely to peril it for a 20*l.* note; and he could not know that the letter contained money.' Mr. Butterby was not cognisant of quite the strict facts, you see.

'It is absurd to suspect Arthur Channing.'

'Which is the most absurd—to suspect him, or to assume that the bank-note vanished without

hands? dried itself up to annihilation? forced its own way through the letter and envelope, and disappeared up the chimney in a whirlwind?' asked the officer, bringing sarcasm to his aid. 'If the facts be as they are stated, that only the two Channings had access to the letter, the guilt must lie with one of them. Facts are facts, Mr. Galloway.'

Mr. Galloway admitted that facts *were* facts, but he could not be brought to allow the guilt of Arthur Channing. The detective rose.

'You have confided the management of this affair to me,' he observed, 'and I make no doubt I shall be able to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. One more question I must ask you. Is it known to your clerks that you have not the number of the note?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Then I fear you stand little chance of ever seeing it again. That fact known, no time would be lost in parting with it; they'd make haste to get it safe off.'

Not an instant did Mr. Butterby take for consideration upon quitting Mr. Galloway. With a sharp, unhesitating step, as though his mind had been made up for a month past as to what his course must be, he took his way direct to the house of Mr. Joe Jenkins. That gentleman, his head

tied up yet, was just leaving for the office, and Mr. Butterby encountered him coming through the shop.

'Good morning, Jenkins. I want a word with you alone.'

Jenkins bowed, in his civil, humble fashion; but 'a word alone' was more easily asked than had, Mrs. Jenkins being all-powerful, and burning with curiosity. The officer had to exert some authority before he could get rid of her, and be left at peace with Jenkins.

'What sources of expense has Arthur Channing?' demanded he, so abruptly as to startle and confuse Jenkins.

'Sources of expense, sir?' he repeated.

'What are his habits? Does he squander money? Does he get out in an evening amidst expensive company?'

'I'm sure, sir, I cannot tell anything about it,' Jenkins was mildly beginning. He was imperatively interrupted by the detective.

'I ask *to know*. You are aware that I possess authority to compel you to speak; therefore, answer me without excuse or circumlocution; it will save trouble.'

'But indeed, sir, I really do *not* know,' persisted Jenkins. 'I should judge Mr. Arthur Channing to be a steady, well-conducted young gentleman,

who has no extravagant habits at all. As to his evenings, I think he spends them mostly at home.'

'Do you know whether he has any pressing debts?'

'I heard him say to Mr. Yorke one day, that a twenty-pound note would pay all he owed, and leave him something out of it,' spoke Jenkins, in his unconscious simplicity.

'Ah!' said Mr. Butterby, drawing in his lips, though his face remained impassive as before. "When was this?'

'Not long ago, sir. About a week, it may have been, before I met with that accident—which accident, I begin to see now, sir, happened providentially, for it caused me to be away from the office when that money was lost.'

'An unpleasant loss,' remarked the officer, with apparent carelessness; 'and the young gentlemen must feel it so—Arthur Channing especially. Yorke, I believe, was out?'

'He does feel it very much, sir. He was as agitated about it yesterday as could be, when Mr. Galloway talked of putting it into the hands of the police. It is a disagreeable thing to have happen in an office, you know, sir.'

A slight pause of silence was made by the detective ere he rejoined, 'Agitated, was he? And Mr. Roland Yorke the same, no doubt?'

'No, sir; Mr. Roland does not seem to care much about it. He thinks it must have been taken in its transit through the post-office, and I cannot help being of the same opinion, sir.'

Another question or two, and Jenkins attended Mr. Butterby to the door. He was preparing to follow him from it, but a peremptory female voice arrested his egress.

'Jenkins, I want you.'

'It is hard upon half-past nine, my dear. I shall be late.'

'If it's hard upon half-past ten, you'll just walk here. I want you, I say.'

Meek as any lamb, Mr. Jenkins returned to the back parlour, and was marshalled into a chair. Mrs. Jenkins closed the door and stood before him. 'Now, then, what did Butterby want?'

'I don't know what he wanted,' replied Jenkins.

'You will sit there till you tell me,' resolutely replied the lady. 'I am not going to have police inquisitors making mysterious visits inside my doors, and not know what they do it for. You'll tell me every word that passed, and the sooner you begin, the better.'

'But I am ignorant myself of what it was he did want,' mildly deprecated Jenkins. 'He asked me a question or two about Mr. Arthur Channing, but why I don't know.'

Leaving Mrs. Jenkins to ferret out the questions one by one—which, you may depend upon it, she would not fail to do, and to keep Jenkins a prisoner until it was over—and leaving Mr. Butterby to proceed to the house of the cathedral organist, whither he was now bent, to ascertain whether Mr. Williams did take the organ voluntarily, and (to Arthur) unexpectedly, that past Friday afternoon, we will go on to other matters. Mr. Butterby best knew what bearing this could have upon the case. Police officers sometimes give to their inquiries a strangely wide range.

CHAPTER II.

AN INTERRUPTED DINNER.

Have you ever observed a large lake on the approach of a sudden storm?—its unnatural stillness, so death-like and ominous; its under flow of angry risings, which you know are gathering there, though not yet apparent on the surface; its dull, booming sound, as of a warning whisper—and then the angry bursting forth of fury when the storm has come?

Not inaptly might the cloisters of Helstonleigh be compared to such, that day, when the college boys were let out of school at one o'clock. A strange rumour had been passed about amid the desks—not reaching that at which sat the seniors—a rumour which shook the equanimity of the school to its centre; and, when one o'clock struck, the boys, instead of clattering out with all the noise of which their legs and lungs were capable, stole down the stairs in quiet, and formed into groups of whisperers in the cloisters. It was the ominous calm that precedes a storm.

So very unusual a state of affairs was noticed by the senior boy. 'What's up now?' he asked them, in the free phraseology in vogue there and elsewhere. 'Are you all going to a funeral? I hope it's your sins that you are about to bury!'

A heavy silence answered him. Gaunt could not make it out. The other three seniors, attracted by the scene, came back, and waited with Gaunt. By that time the calm was being broken by low murmurings, just like the first threatened rising of the stormy waters; and certain distinct words came from more than one of the groups.

'What do you say?' burst forth Tom Channing, darting forward as the words caught his ear. 'You, Jackson! speak up, *what* is it?'

Not Jackson's voice in particular, but several other voices arose then; a word from one, a word from another, half sentences, disjointed hints, forming together an unmistakable whole. 'The theft of old Galloway's bank-note has been traced to Arthur Channing.'

'Who says it? Who dares to say it?' flashed Tom, his face on fire, and his hand clenched.

'The police say it. Butterby says it.'

'I don't care for the police, I don't care for Butterby,' cried Tom, stamping his foot in his terrible indignation. 'I ask, who dares to say it here?'

'I do, then! come, Mr. Channing, though you are a senior, and can put me up to Pye for punishment upon any false plea that you choose,' answered a tall fellow, Pierce senior, who was chiefly remarkable for getting into fights, and was just now unusually friendly with Mark Galloway, at whose desk he sat.

Quick as lightning, Tom Channing turned and faced him. 'Speak out what you have to say,' cried he; 'no hints.'

'Whew!' retorted Pierce senior, 'd'ye think I am afraid? I say that Arthur Channing stole the note lost by old Galloway.'

Tom, in his uncontrollable temper, raised his hand and struck him. One half-minute's struggle, nothing more, and Pierce senior was sprawling on the ground, while Tom Channing's cheek and nose were bleeding. Gaunt had stepped between them.

'I stop this,' he said. 'Pierce, get up! don't lie there like a floundering donkey. Channing, what possessed you to forget yourself?'

'You would have done the same, Gaunt, had the insult been offered to you. Let the fellow retract his words, or prove them.'

'Very good. That is how you ought to have met it at first,' said Gaunt. 'Now, Mr. Pierce, can you make good your assertion?'

Pierce had floundered up, and was rubbing one

of his long legs, which had got doubled under him in the fall, while his brother, Pierce junior, was collecting an armful of scattered books, and whispering prognostications of parental vengeance in prospective; for, so sure as Pierce senior got into a fight at school, to the damage of his face or his clothes, so sure was it followed up by punishment at home.

'If you want proof, go to Butterby at the police place, and get it from him,' sullenly replied Pierce, who was of a sulky temper as well as a pugnacious one.

'Look here,' interrupted Mark Galloway, springing to the front; 'Pierce was a fool to bring it out in that way, but I'll speak up, now it has come to this. I went into my uncle's, this morning, at nine o'clock, and there was he, shut in with Butterby. Butterby was saying that there was no doubt the theft had been committed by Arthur Channing. Mind, Channing,' Mark added, turning to Tom, 'I am not seconding the accusation on my own score; but, that Butterby said it, I'll declare.'

'Pshaw! is that all?' cried Tom Channing, lifting his head with a haughty gesture, and not condescending to notice the blood which trickled from his cheek. 'You must have misunderstood him, boy.'

'No, I did not,' replied Mark Galloway. 'I heard him as plainly as I hear you now.'

'It is hardly likely Butterby would say that before you, Galloway,' observed Gaunt.

'Ah, but he did not see I was there, or my uncle either,' said Mark. 'When he is reading his newspaper of a morning, he can't bear a noise, and I go into the room always as quiet as mischief. He turned me out again pretty quick, I can tell you; but not till I had heard Butterby say that.'

'You must have misunderstood,' returned Gaunt, carelessly taking up Tom Channing's notion; 'and you had no right to blurt out such a thing to the school. Arthur Channing is better known and trusted than you, Mr. Mark.'

'I didn't accuse Arthur Channing to the school. I only repeated to my desk what Butterby said.'

'It is that "only repeating" which does three parts of the mischief in this world,' said Gaunt, giving the boys a little touch of morality gratis, to their intense edification. 'As to you, Pierce senior, you'll get more than you bargain for, some of these days, if you poke your ill-conditioned nose so often into other people's business.'

Tom Channing had strode away towards his home, his head erect, his step ringing firmly and proudly on the cloister flags. Charley ran by his

side. But Charley's face was white, and Tom caught sight of it.

'What are you looking like that for?'

'Tom! you don't think it's true, do you?'

Tom turned his scorn upon the boy. 'You uncommon idiot! True! A Channing turn thief! *You* may, perhaps—it's best known to yourself—but never Arthur.'

'I don't mean that. I mean, can it be true that the police suspect him?'

'Oh! that's what your face becomes milk for? You ought to have been born a girl, Miss Charley. If the police do suspect him, what of that?—they'll only get the tables turned upon themselves. Butterby might come out and say he suspects me of murder! Should I care? No; I'd prove my innocence, and make him eat his words.'

They were drawing near home. Charley looked up at his brother. 'You must wipe your face, Tom.'

Tom took out his handkerchief, and gave his face a rub. In his indignation, his carelessness, he would have done nothing of the sort, had he not been reminded by the boy. 'Is it off?'

'Yes, it's off. I am not sure but it will break out again. You must take care.'

'Oh, bother! let it. I should like to have

polished off that Pierce senior as he deserves. Some coin of the same sort would do Galloway no harm. Were I senior of the school, and Arthur not my brother, Mr. Mark should hear a little home truth about sneaks. I'll tell it him in private, as it is; but I can't put him up for punishment, or act in it as Gaunt could.'

'Arthur is our brother, therefore we feel it more pointedly than Gaunt can,' sensibly remarked Charley.

'I'd advise you not to spell forth that sentimental rubbish, though you are a young lady,' retorted Tom. 'A senior boy, if he does his duty, should make every boy's cause his own, and "feel" for him.'

'Tom,' said the younger and more thoughtful of the two, 'don't let us say anything of this at home.'

'Why not?' asked Tom, hotly. He would have run in open-mouthed.

'It would pain mamma to hear it.'

'Boy! do you suppose *she* would fear Arthur?'

'You seem to misconstrue all I say, Tom. Of course she would not fear him—you did not fear him; but it stung you, I know, as was proved by your knocking down Pierce.'

'Well, I won't speak of it before her,' conciliated Tom, somewhat mollified, 'or before my

father, either; but catch me keeping it from the rest.'

As Charles had partially foretold, they had barely entered, when Tom's face again became ornamented with crimson. Annabel shrieked out, startling Mr. Channing on his sofa. Mrs. Channing, as it happened, was not present; Constance was. Lady Augusta Yorke and her daughters were spending part of the day in the country, therefore Constance had come home at twelve.

'Look at Tom's face!' cried the child. 'What has he been doing? Look! look! it will drop on to his shirt!'

'Hold your tongue, little stupid,' returned Tom, hastily bringing his handkerchief into use again; which, being a white one, made the worst sight of the two, with its bright red stains. 'It's nothing but a scratch.'

But Annabel's eyes were sharp, and she had taken full view of the hurt. 'Tom, you have been fighting! I am sure of it!'

'Come to me, Tom,' said Mr. Channing. 'Have you been fighting?' he demanded, as Tom crossed the room in obedience, and stood close to him. 'Take your handkerchief away, that I may see your face.'

'It could not be called a fight, papa,' said Tom, holding his cheek so that the light from the win-

dow fell full upon the hurt. 'One of the boys offended me; I hit him, and he gave me this; then I knocked him down, and there it ended. It's only a scratch.'

'Thomas, was this Christian conduct?'

'I don't know, papa. It was schoolboy's.'

Mr. Channing, could not forbear a smile. 'I know it was a schoolboy's conduct; that is bad enough: and it is my son's, that is worse.'

'If I had given him what he deserved, he would have got ten times as much; and perhaps I should, for my temper was up, only Gaunt put in his interference. When I am senior, my policy of rule will be different from what Gaunt's is.'

'Ah, Tom! your "temper up!" It is that temper of yours which brings you harm. What was the quarrel about?'

'I would rather not tell you, papa. Not for my own sake,' he added, turning his honest eyes fearlessly on his father; 'but I could not tell it without betraying something about somebody, which it may be as well to keep in.'

'After that lucid explanation, you had better go and get some warm water for your face,' said Mr. Channing. 'I will speak with you later.'

Constance followed him from the room, volunteering to procure the warm water. They were standing in Tom's chamber afterwards, Tom

bathing his face, and Constance looking on, when Arthur, who had then come in from Mr. Galloway's, passed by to his own room.

'Hallo!' he called out; 'what's the matter, Tom?'

'Such a row!' answered Tom. 'And I wish I could have pitched into Pierce senior as I'd have liked. What do you think, Arthur? The school were taking up the notion that you—you!—had stolen old Galloway's bank-note. Pierce senior set it agate; that is, he and Mark Galloway together. Mark said a word, and Pierce said two, and so it went on. I should have paid Pierce out but for Gaunt.'

A silence. It was filled up by the sound of Tom splashing the water on his face, and by that only. Arthur spoke presently, his tone so calm a one as to be almost unnatural.

'How did the notion arise?'

'Mark Galloway said he heard Butterby talking with his uncle; that Butterby said the theft could only have been committed by Arthur Channing. Mark Galloway's ears must have played him false; but it was a regular sneak's trick to come and repeat it for fact in the school. I say, Constance, is my face clean now?'

Constance woke up from a reverie to look at his face. 'Quite clean,' she answered.

He dried it, dried his hands, gave a glance at his shirt front in the glass, which had, however, escaped damage, brushed his hair, and went down stairs. Arthur closed the door and turned to Constance. Her eyes were seeking his, and her lips stood apart. The terrible fear which had fallen upon them both the previous day had not yet been spoken out between them. It must be spoken now.

'Constance, there is tribulation before us,' he whispered. 'We must school ourselves to bear it, however difficult the task may prove. Whatever betide the rest of us, suspicion must be averted from *him*.'

'What tribulation do you mean?' she gasped.

'The affair has been placed in the hands of the police; and I believe—I believe,' Arthur spoke with agitation, 'that they will publicly investigate it. Constance, they suspect *me*. The college school is right, and Tom is wrong.'

Constance leaned against a chest of drawers to steady herself, and pressed her hand upon her shrinking face. 'How have you learnt it?'

'I have gathered it from different trifles; one fact and another. Jenkins said Butterby was with him this morning, asking questions about me. Better that I should be suspected than Hamish. God help me to bear it!'

'But it is so unjust that you should suffer for him.'

'Were it traced home to him, it might be the whole family's ruin, for my father would inevitably lose his place. He might lose it were only suspicion to stray to Hamish. There is no alternative. I must screen him. Can you be firm, Constance, when you see me accused?'

Constance leaned her head upon her hand, wondering whether she could be firm in the cause. But that she knew where to go for strength, she might have doubted it: for the love of right, the principles of justice were strong within her. 'Oh! what could possess him?' she uttered, wringing her hands, 'what could possess him! Arthur, is there not a loophole, not the faintest loophole to hope in his innocence?'

'None that I see. No one whatever had access to the letter but Hamish and I. He must have yielded to the temptation in a moment of delirium, knowing the money would clear him from some of his pressing debts—as it has done.'

'How could he brave the risk of detection?'

'I don't know. My head aches, pondering over it. I suppose he concluded that the suspicion would fall upon the post-office. It would have fallen on it, but for that seal placed on the letter afterwards. What an unfortunate thing it was,

that Roland Yorke mentioned there was money inside the letter in the hearing of Hamish!'

'Did he mention it?' exclaimed Constance.

'He said there was a twenty-pound note in the letter, going to the cousin Galloway, and Hamish remarked that he wished it was going into his pocket instead. I *wish*,' Arthur uttered, in a sort of frenzy, 'I had locked the letter up there and then.'

Constance clasped her hands in pain. 'I fear he may have been going wrong for some time,' she breathed. 'It has come to my knowledge, through Judith, that he sits up for hours night after night, doing something to the books. Arthur,' she shivered, glancing fearfully round, 'I hope those accounts are right?'

The doubt thus given utterance to, blanched even the cheeks of Arthur. 'Sits up at the books!' he exclaimed.

'He sits up, that is certain; and at the books, as I conclude. He takes them into his room at night. It may only be that he has not time, or does not make time, to go over them in the day. It *may* be.'

'I trust it is; I pray it may be. Mind you, Constance, our duty is plain—to screen him; to screen him at any sacrifice to ourselves, for the father and mother's sake.'

'Sacrifice to you, you ought to say. Oh, what were our other light troubles, compared with this? Arthur, will they publicly accuse you?'

'It may come; I have been steeling myself all the morning to meet it.'

He looked into her face as he said it. Constance could see how his brow and heart were aching. At that moment they were called to dinner, and Arthur turned to leave the room. Constance caught his hand, the tears raining from her eyes.

'Arthur,' she whispered, 'in the very darkest trouble, God can comfort us. Be assured he will comfort you.'

Hamish did not make his appearance at dinner, and they sat down without him. This was not so very unusual as to cause surprise; he was occasionally detained at the office.

The meal was about half over, when Annabel, in her disregard of the bounds of discipline, suddenly started from her seat and flew to the window.

'Charley, here are two policemen coming here! Whatever can they want?'

'Perhaps to take you,' said Mrs. Channing, jestingly. 'A short sojourn at the tread-mill might be of great service to you, Annabel.'

The announcement had struck upon the ear

and memory of Tom. 'Policemen!' he exclaimed, standing up in his place, and stretching his neck on high to obtain a view of them. 'Why—it never can be, that—old Butterby——Arthur, what ails you?'

A sensitive, refined nature, be it implanted in man or woman, is almost sure to betray its emotions on the countenance. Such a nature was Arthur Channing's. Now that the dread had really come, every drop of blood forsook his cheeks and lips, leaving his face altogether of a ghastly whiteness. He was utterly unable to control or help this, and it was this pallor which had given rise to Tom's concluding exclamation.

Mr. Channing looked at Arthur, Mrs. Channing looked at him; they all looked at him, except Constance, and she bent her head lower over her plate, to hide, as she best might, her own white face and its shrinking terror. 'Are you ill, Arthur?' inquired his father.

A low brief reply came; one struggling for calmness. 'No, sir.'

Impetuous Tom, forgetting caution, forgetting all save the moment actually present, gave utterance to more than was expedient. 'Arthur, you are never fearing what those wretched schoolboys said? The police are not come to arrest you. Butterby wouldn't be such a fool!'

But the police were in the hall, and Judith had come to the dining-room door. 'Master Arthur, you are wanted, please.'

'What is all this?' exclaimed Mr. Channing in astonishment, gazing from Tom to Arthur, from Arthur to the vision of the blue official dress, a glimpse of which he could catch beyond Judith. Tom took up the answer.

'It's nothing, papa. It's a trick they are playing for fun, I'll lay. They *can't* really suspect Arthur of stealing the bank-note, you know. They'd never dare to take him up, like they take a felon.'

Charley stole round to Arthur with a wailing cry, and threw his arms around him—as if their weak protection could retain him in its shelter. Arthur gently unwound them, and bent down till his lips touched the yearning face held up to him in its anguish.

'Charley, boy, I am innocent,' he breathed in the boy's ear. 'Don't keep me. They have come for me, and I must go with them.'

CHAPTER III.

AN ESCORT TO THE GUILDHALL.

The group would have formed a study for the painter Wilkie. The arrested dinner; the consternation of those assembled at it: Mr. Channing (whose sofa, wheeled to the table, took up the end opposite his wife) gazing around with a puzzled, stern expression; Mrs. Channing glancing behind her with a sense of undefined dread; the pale, *conscious* countenances of Arthur and Constance; Tom standing up in haughty impetuosity, defiant of everybody; the lively terror of Charley's face, as he clung to Arthur; and the wide-opened eyes of Annabel, expressive of nothing but surprise—for it took a vast deal to alarm that careless young lady; while, at the door, holding it open for Arthur, stood Judith in her mob-cap, full of curiosity; and behind her, the two policemen. A scene indeed, that Wilkie, in the zenith of his power, would have rejoiced to paint.

Arthur, battling fiercely with his outraged pride, and breathing an inward hope for strength

to go through with his task, for patience to endure, put Charley from him, and went into the hall. He saw not what was immediately around him—the inquiring looks of his father and mother, the necessity of some explanation to them; he saw not Judith and her curious face. A scale was, as it were, before his eyes, blinding them to all outward influences, save one—the officers of justice standing there, and the purpose for which they had come. 'What on earth has happened, Master Arthur?' whispered Judith, as he passed her, terrifying the old servant with his pale scared face. But he neither heard nor answered; he walked straight up to the men.

'I will go with you quietly,' he said to them, in an under-tone. 'Do not make a disturbance, to alarm my mother.'

We cannot always have our senses about us, as the phrase goes. Some of us, I fear, enjoy that privilege but rarely, and the very best lose them on occasions. But that Arthur Channing was totally uncollected, he would not have pursued a line of conduct in that critical moment, which was liable to be construed into an admission, or, at least, a consciousness of guilt. In his anxiety to avert suspicion from Hamish, he lost sight of the precautions necessary to guard himself, so far as was practicable. And yet he had spent time

that morning, thinking over what his manner, his bearing must be, if it came to this! Had it come upon him unexpectedly, he would have met it very differently; with far less of outward calmness, but most probably with indignant denial. 'I will go with you quietly,' he said to the men.

'All right, sir,' they answered, with a knowing nod, and a conviction that he was a cool hand and a guilty one. 'It's always best not to resist the law—it never does no good.'

He need not have resisted, but he ought to have waited until they asked him to go. A dim perception of this had already begun to steal over him. He was taking his hat from its place in the hall, when the voice of Mr. Channing came ringing on his ear.

'Arthur, what is this? Give me an explanation.'

Arthur turned back to the room, passing through the sea of faces to get there; for all, save his helpless father, had come from their seats to gather round and about that strange mystery in the hall, to try to fathom it. Mr. Channing gave one long, keen glance at Arthur's face—which was very unlike Arthur's usual face just then; for all its candour seemed to have gone out of it. He did not speak to him; he called in one of the men.

'Will you tell me your business here?' he asked, courteously.

'Don't you know it, sir?' was the reply.

'No, I do not,' replied Mr. Channing.

'Well, sir, it's a unpleasant accusation as is brought against this young gentleman. But perhaps he'll be able to make it clear. I hope he will. It don't give us no pleasure when folks is convicted, especially young ones, and those we have always known for respectable; we'd rather see 'em let off.'

Tom interrupted—Tom, in his fiery indignation. 'Is it of stealing that bank note lost by Galloway that you presume to accuse my brother?' he asked, speaking indistinctly in his haste and passion.

'You have said it, sir,' replied the man. 'That's it.'

'Then I say that whoever accuses him ought to be——'

'Silence, Thomas,' interrupted Mr. Channing. 'Allow me to deal with this. Who brings this accusation against my son?'

'We got our orders from Mr. Butterby, sir. He is acting for Mr. Galloway. He was called in there early this morning.'

'Have you come for my son to go with you to Mr. Galloway's?'

'Not there, sir. We have got to take him straight to the Guildhall. The magistrates are waiting to hear the case.

A dismayed pause. Even Mr. Channing's heart, with all its implicit faith in the truth and honour of his children, beat as if it would burst its bounds. Tom's beat too; but it was with a desire to 'pitch into' the policemen, as he had pitched into Pierce senior in the cloisters.

Mr. Channing turned to Arthur. 'You have an answer to this, my son?'

The question was not replied to. Mr. Channing spoke again, with the same calm emphasis: 'Arthur, you can vouch for your innocence?'

Arthur Channing did the very worst thing that he could have done—he hesitated. Instead of replying readily and firmly 'I can,' which he might have done without harm arising, he stopped to ask himself how far, consistent with safety to Hamish, he might defend his own cause. His mind was not collected; he had not, as I have said, his senses about him; and the unbroken silence, waiting for his answer, the expectant faces turned upon him, helped to confuse him and to scare his reason further away. The signs, which certainly did look like signs of guilt, struck a knell on the heart of his father. 'Arthur!' he wailed out, in a tone of intense agony, 'you *are* innocent?'

'Y—es,' replied Arthur, gulping down his rising breath; his rising words. Impassioned words of exculpation, of innocence, of truth: they had bubbled up within him—were hovering on the tip of his impatient tongue—on the verge of his burning lips. He did beat them down again and swallow them; but he never knew afterwards how he did it.

Better that he had been still silent, than speak that dubious, indecisive 'Y—es.' It told terribly against him. One, conscious of his own innocence does not proclaim it in indistinct, shuffling words. Tom's mouth dropped with dismay, and his astonished eyes seemed as if they could not take themselves off Arthur's vacillating face. Mrs. Channing staggered against the wall, with a faint cry.

The policeman spoke up: he meant to be friendly. In all Helstonleigh there was not a family more respected than were the Channings; and the man felt a passing sorrow for his task. 'I wouldn't ask no questions, sir, if I was you. Sometimes it's best not: they tell against the accused.'

'The time's up,' called out the one who was in the hall, to his fellow. 'We can't stop here all day.'

The hint was taken at once, both by Arthur and the man. Constance had kept herself still through-

out, by main force; but Mrs. Channing could not see him go away like this. She rose and threw her arms round him, in a burst of hysterical feeling, sobbing out 'My boy! my boy!'

'Don't, mother! dont unnerve me,' he whispered. 'It is bad enough as it is.'

'But you cannot be guilty, Arthur?'

For answer he looked straight into her eyes for a single moment. His habitual expression had come back to them again—the earnest of confiding truth, which she had ever known and trusted. It spoke calm to her heart now. 'You are innocent,' she murmured. 'Then go in peace.'

Annabel broke into a loud storm of shrieks and sobs. 'Oh, Judith! will they hang him? will they hang him? What is it that he has done?'

'I'd hang them two policemen, if I did what I should like to do,' responded Judith. 'Yes, you two, I mean,' she added, with scant ceremony, as the officials turned round at the words. 'If I had my will, I'd hang you both up to two of them elm-trees yonder, right in front of one another. Coming to a gentleman's house on this errand!'

'Do not drag me through the streets ignominiously,' said Arthur to his keepers. 'I give you my word to make no resistance: I will go to the Guildhall, or anywhere else that you please, as freely as if I were bound thither on my own plea-

sure. You need not let it be seen that I am in custody.'

They saw that they might trust him. One of the policemen went over to the opposite side of the way, as if pacing his beat; the other continued by the side of Arthur: not too closely; not to cause suspicion in those they met. A few paces from the door Tom Channing came pelting up, and put his arm within Arthur's.

'Guilty, or not guilty, it shall never be said a Channing was deserted by his brothers!' quoth he. 'I wish Hamish could have been here.'

'Tom, you are thinking me guilty?' Arthur said, in a quiet tone, which did not reach the ears of his official escort.

'Well—I am in a maze,' avowed Tom. 'I you are guilty, I shall never believe in anything again. I have always thought that building there a cathedral: well and good; but if it turns out to be a house, I shan't be surprised, after this. *Are* you guilty?'

'No, lad.'

The refutation was simple, and calmly expressed; but there was sufficient in its tone to make Tom Channing's heart give a great leap within him.

'Thank God! What a fool I was! But, I say, Arthur, why did you not deny it, out-and-out?

Your manner frightened us. I suppose the police scared you?'

Tom, all right now, walked along, his head up, escorting Arthur with as little shame to the public examination, as he would have done to be publicly crowned. It was not the humiliation of undeserved contumely that could daunt the Channings: the consciousness of guilt could alone effect that. Hitherto, neither guilt nor its shadow had fallen upon them.

'Tom,' asked Arthur, when they reached the hall, and were about to enter, 'will you do me a a little service?'

'Won't I, though! what is it?'

'Make the best of your way to Mr. Williams's, and tell him I am prevented taking the organ this afternoon.'

'I shan't tell him the reason,' said Tom.

'Why not? In an hour's time it will be known from one end of Helstonleigh to the other.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXAMINATION.

THE magistrates sat on the bench in the town-hall of Helstonleigh. But, previous to the case being called on—for the police had spoken too fast in saying they were waiting for it—Arthur became acquainted with one great fact: that it was not Mr. Galloway who had pushed matters to this extremity. Neither was he aware that Arthur had been taken into custody. Mr. Butterby had assumed the responsibiliy, and acted upon it. Mr. Butterby, since his interview with Mr. Galloway in the morning, had gathered, as he believed, sufficient corroborating facts to establish, or nearly so, the guilt of Arthur Channing. He supposed that this was all Mr. Galloway required to remove his objection to harsh measures; and, in procuring the warrant for the capture, Mr. Butterby had acted as for Mr. Galloway.

When Arthur was placed in the spot where he had often seen criminals standing, his face again wore the livid hue which had overspread it in his

home. In a few moments this had changed to crimson; brow and cheeks were glowing with it. It was a painful situation, and Arthur felt it to the very depths of his naturally proud spirit. I don't think you or I should have liked it.

The circumstances were stated to the magistrates just as they have been stated to you. The placing of the bank-note and letter in the envelope by Mr. Galloway, his immediately fastening it down by means of the gum, the abstraction of the note, between that time and the period when the seal was placed on it later in the day, and the fact that Arthur Channing alone had access to it. 'Except Mr. Hamish Channing, for a few minutes,' Mr. Butterby added, 'who kindly remained in the office while his brother proceeded as far as the Cathedral and back again; the other clerks, Joseph Jenkins and Roland Yorke, being absent that afternoon.'

A deeper dye flushed Arthur's face when Hamish's name and share in the afternoon's doings were mentioned, and he bent his eyes on the floor at his feet, and kept them there. Had Hamish not been implicated, he would have stood there comparatively free, with a clear eye and a serene brow. It was that, the all too consciousness of the sin of Hamish, which took the spirit out of him, and drove him to stand there as one under

the brand of guilt. He scarcely dared look up, lest it should be read in his countenance that he was innocent, and Hamish guilty; he scarcely dared to pronounce, in ever so faltering a tone, the avowal 'I did it not.' Had it been to save his life from the scaffold, he could not have spoken out boldly and freely that day. There was the bitter shock of the crime, felt for Hamish's own sake: Hamish whom they had all so loved, so looked up to! and there was the dread of the consequences to Mr. Channing in the event of discovery. Had the penalty been hanging, I believe that Arthur would have gone to it, rather than betray Hamish. But you must not suppose he did not *feel* it for himself; there were moments when he feared lest he should not carry it through.

Mr. Butterby was waiting for a witness—Mr. Galloway himself: and meanwhile, he entertained the bench with certain scraps, anecdotal and the like, premising what would be proved before them. Jenkins would show that the prisoner had avowed, in his presence, it would take a twenty-pound note to clear him from his debts, or hard upon it——

'No,' interrupted the hitherto silent prisoner, to the surprise of those present, 'that is not true. It is correct that I did make use of words to that effect, but I spoke them in jest. I and Roland Yorke were one day speaking of debts, and I

jokingly said a twenty-pound note would pay mine, and leave me something out of it. Jenkins was present, and he may have supposed I spoke in earnest. In point of fact I did not owe anything.'

It was an assertion more easily made than proved. Arthur Channing might have large liabilities upon him, for all that appeared in that court to the contrary. Mr. Butterby handed the seal to the bench, who examined it curiously.

'I could have understood this case better had any stranger or strangers approached the letter,' observed one of the magistrates, who knew the Channings personally, and greatly respected their high character. 'You are sure you are not mistaken in supposing nobody came in?' he added, looking kindly at Arthur.

'Certainly no one came in whilst I was alone in the office, sir,' was the unhesitating answer.

The gentleman spoke in an under-tone to those beside him. 'That avowal is in his favour. Had he taken the note, one might suppose he would be anxious to have it appear that strangers did enter, so as to throw the suspicion off himself.'

'I have made very close inquiry, and cannot find that the office was entered at all that afternoon,' observed Mr. Butterby. Mr. Butterby *had* made close inquiry; and, to do him justice, he did

not seek to throw one shade of guilt upon Arthur more than he deemed the case warranted. 'Mr. Hamish Channing also——'

Mr. Butterby stopped. There, standing within the door, was Hamish himself. In passing along the street he had seen an unusual commotion around the town-hall; and, upon inquiring its cause, was told that Arthur Channing was under examination, on suspicion of having stolen the bank-note lost by Mr. Galloway.

To look at Hamish, you would have believed him innocent and unconscious as the day. He strode into the justice-room, his eye flashing, his brow haughty, his colour high. Never had gay Hamish looked so scornfully indignant. He threw his glance round the crowded court in search of Arthur, and it found him.

Their eyes met. A strange gaze it was, going out from the one to the other; a gaze which the brothers had never in all their lives exchanged. Arthur's spoke of shame all too palpably—he could not help it in that bitter moment—shame for his brother. And Hamish shrunk under it. If ever one cowered visibly in this world, Hamish Channing did then. A low, suppressed cry went up from Arthur's heart: whatever fond, faint doubt may have lingered on his mind, it died out from that moment.

Others noticed the significant, prolonged look exchanged between them; but they, not in the secret, saw only, on the part of Hamish, what they took to be vexation at his brother's position. It was suggested that it would save time to take the evidence of Mr. Hamish Channing at once. Mr. Galloway's might be received later.

'What evidence?' demanded Hamish, standing before the magistrates in a cold, uncompromising manner, and speaking in a cold, uncompromising tone. 'I have none to give. I know nothing of the affair.'

'Not much, we are aware; but what little you do know must be spoken, Mr. Hamish Channing.'

They did not swear him. These were but informal, preliminary proceedings. Country courts of law and justice are not always conducted according to the orthodox rules, even that of Helstonleigh. There would be another and a more formal examination previous to the committal of the prisoner for trial—if committed he should be.

A few unimportant questions were put to Hamish, and then he was asked whether he saw the letter in question.

'I saw a letter which I suppose to have been the one,' he replied. 'It was addressed to Mr. Robert Galloway, at Ventnor.'

'Did you observe your brother take it into Mr. Galloway's private room?'

'Yes,' answered Hamish. 'In putting the desks to rights before departing for college, my brother carried the letter into Mr. Galloway's room and left it there. I distinctly remember his doing so.'

'Did you see the letter after that?'

'No.'

'How long did you remain alone while your brother was away?'

'I did not look at my watch,' crabbedly returned Hamish, who had spoken in a resentful tone throughout, as if some great wrong were being inflicted upon him, in having to speak at all.

'But you can guess at the time?'

'No, I can't,' shortly retorted Hamish. 'And "guesses" are not evidence.'

'Was it ten minutes?'

'It may have been. I know he seemed to be back almost as soon as he had gone.'

'Did any person—clerk, or stranger, or visitor, or otherwise—come into the office during his absence from it?'

'No.'

'No person whatever?'

'No person whatever. I think,' continued Hamish, volunteering an opinion upon the subject

although he knew it was out of all rule and precedent to do so, 'that there is a vast deal of unprofitable fuss being made about the matter. The money must have been lost in its transit through the post; it is impossible to suppose otherwi——'

Hamish was stopped by a commotion. Clattering along the outer hall, and bursting in at the court door, his black hair awry, his usually pale cheeks streaked with scarlet, his nostrils working with excitement, came Roland Yorke. He was in a state of fierce emotion. Learning, as he had done by accident, that Arthur had been arrested upon the charge, he took up the cause hotly, gave vent to a burst of passionate indignation (in which he abused everybody under the sun, save Arthur), and tore off to the town-hall. Elbowing the crowd roughly right and left, in his impetuosity, pushing one policeman here, and another yonder, who would have impeded his path, he came up to Arthur, and ranged himself by his side, linking his arm within his in an outburst of kindly generosity.

'Old fellow, who has done this?'

'Mr. Roland Yorke!' exclaimed the bench, indignantly. 'What do you mean by this behaviour? Stand away, if you please, sir.'

'I'll stand away when Arthur Channing stands away,' retorted Yorke, apparently ignoring whose

presence he was in. 'Who accuses him? Mr. Galloway does not. This is your doing, Butterby.'

'Take care that their worships don't commit you for contempt of court,' retorted Mr. Butterby. 'You are going on for it, Roland Yorke.'

'Let them commit me, if they will,' foamed Roland. 'I am not going to see a friend falsely accused, and not stand up for him. Channing no more touched that money than any of you did. The post-office must have had it.'

'A moment, Mr. Roland Yorke; if you can calm yourself sufficiently to answer as a rational being,' interposed the magistrate who had addressed Arthur. 'Have you any proof to urge in support of your assertion that the prisoner did not touch it?'

'Proof, sir!' returned Roland, subsiding, however, into a tone of more respect; 'does it want common-place proof to establish the innocence of Arthur Channing? Every action of his past life is a proof. He is honest as the day.'

'This warm feeling does you credit, in one sense ——'

'It does me no credit at all,' fiercely interrupted Roland. 'I don't defend him because he is my friend; I don't defend him because we are in the same office, and sit side by side at the same desk; I do it, because I know him to be innocent.'

'How do you know it?'

'He *could* not be guilty. He is incapable of it. Better accuse me, or Jenkins, than accuse him!'

'You and Jenkins were not at the office during the suspected time.

'Well, I know we were not,' acknowledged Roland, dropping his voice to a more reasonable tone. 'And, just because it happened, by some cross-gained luck, that Channing was, Butterby pitches on him, and accuses him of the theft. He never did it! and I'll say it with my last breath.'

With some trouble; threatenings on the part of the court, and more bursts of explosion from himself; Mr. Roland Yorke was persuaded to retire. He got as far as the back of the room, and there he indulged in under-currents of wrath, touching injustice and Mr. Butterby, to a select circle who gathered round him. Warm-hearted and generous, by fits and starts, was Roland Yorke; he had inherited it with his Irish blood from Lady Augusta.

But meanwhile, where was Mr. Galloway? He did not make his appearance, and it was said he could not be found. Messenger after messenger was dispatched to his office, to his house; and at length Mr. Butterby went himself. All in vain; his servants knew nothing about him. Jenkins, who had the office to himself, thought he must be

'somewhere in the town,' as he had not said he was going out of it. Mr. Butterby went back crest-fallen, and confessed that, not to take up longer the time of their worships unnecessarily, the case must be remanded to the morrow.

'We will take bail,' said the magistrates, before the application was made. 'One surety will be sufficient; fifty pounds.'

At that, Mr. Roland, who by this time was standing in a sullen manner against a pillar of the court, his violence gone, and biting his nails moodily, made a rush to the front again, heeding little who he knocked down in the process. 'I'll be bail,' he cried, eagerly. 'That is, Lady Augusta will—as I am not a householder. I'll hunt her up and bring her here.'

He was turning in his impetuous haste to 'hunt up' Lady Augusta, when Hamish Channing imperatively waved to him to be still, and spoke to the bench.

'My father's security will be sufficient, I presume?'

'Quite so.'

Since Mr. Channing's incapacity, power to sign and to act for him had been vested in Hamish; and the matter was concluded forthwith. The court poured out its crowds. Hamish was on the point of taking Arthur's arm, but was pushed aside

by Roland Yorke, who seized upon it as if he could never make enough of him.

'The miserable idiots! to bring such a charge against you, Arthur! I have been half mad ever since I heard of it.'

'Thank you, Yorke. You are very kind——'

'"Kind!" Don't talk that school-girl rubbish!' passionately interrupted Roland. 'If I were taken up upon a false charge, wouldn't you stand by me?'

'That I would; were it false or true.'

'I'll pay that Butterby out, if it's ten years hence! And you, knowing your own innocence, could stand before them there, meek-faced as a tame cat, letting Butterby and the bench have it their own way! A calm temper, such as yours, Arthur, may be very—what do they call it?—Christian, but I'm blest if it's useful! I should have made their ears tingle, had they put me there, like they have not tingled for many a day.'

'Who do you suppose took the note?' inquired Hamish of Roland Yorke, speaking for the first time.

'Bother the note!' was the rejoinder of Mr. Roland. 'It's nothing to us who took it. Arthur didn't. Go and ask the post-office.'

'But the seal?' Hamish was beginning in a

friendly tone of argument. Roland bore him down.

'Who cares for the seal? I don't. If Galloway had stuck himself upon the letter, instead of his seal, and never got off it till it reached the cousin Galloway's hand, I'd not care for it. It tells nothing. Do you *want* to find your brother guilty?' he continued, in a tone of scorn. 'You did not stand up half for him, Hamish Channing, as I'd expect a brother to stand up for me. Now then, you people! Are you thinking we are live kangaroos escaped from a menagerie? Be off about your own business! Don't come after us.'

The last was addressed to a crowd, who had followed upon their heels from the court, in staring curiosity, with that innate delicacy for which we English are remarkable. They had seen Arthur Channing a thousand times before, every one of them, but, as he had been arrested, they must look at him again. Yorke's scornful reproach and his fierce face somewhat scattered them.

'If it had been Galloway's doings, I'd never have put my foot inside his confounded old office again!' went on Roland. 'No! and my lady might have tried her best to force me. Lugging a fellow up for a pitiful, paltry sum of twenty pounds!—who is as much a gentleman as himself!—who, as his own senses might tell him, wouldn't touch it

with the end of his finger! But it was that Butterby's handiwork, not Galloway's.'

'Galloway must have given Butterby his instructions,' observed Hamish.

'He didn't, then,' snapped Roland. 'Jenkins says he knows he did not, by the remarks Galloway made to him this morning. And Galloway has been away ever since eleven o'clock, we can't tell where. It is nobody but that evil, mischief-making Butterby, and I'd give a crown out of my pocket to have a good duck at him in the river!'

With regard to Mr. Galloway's knowing nothing of the active proceedings taken against Arthur, Roland was right. Mr. Butterby had dispatched a note to Mr. Galloway's office at one o'clock, stating what he had done, and requesting him to be at the office at two, for the examination—which note had been lying there ever since.

It was being opened now. Now—at the exact moment that Mr. Roland Yorke was giving vent to that friendly little wish, conjoining the river and Mr. Butterby. Mr. Galloway had met a friend in the town, and had gone with him a few miles by rail into the country, on unexpected business. He had just returned to find the note, and to hear Jenkins' account of Arthur's arrest.

'I am vexed at this,' he exclaimed, his tone

betraying excessive annoyance; 'Butterby has exceeded his orders.'

Jenkins thought he might venture to put in a word for Arthur. He had been intensely surprised, indeed grieved, at the whole affair; and, the not less so, that he feared what he had unconsciously repeated, about a twenty-pound note paying Arthur's debts, might have helped it on.

'I feel as sure, as sure can be, sir, that it was not Mr. Arthur Channing,' he deferentially said. 'I have not been in this office with him for more than twelve months without learning something of his principles.'

'The principles of all the Channings are well known,' returned Mr. Galloway. 'No; whatever may be the apparent proofs, I cannot bring myself to think it could be Arthur Channing. Although ——' Mr. Galloway did not say although *what*, but changed the topic abruptly. 'Are they in court now?'

'I expect so, sir. Mr. Yorke is not back yet.'

Mr. Galloway walked to the outer door, deliberating what his course should be. The affair grieved him more than he could express; it angered him; chiefly for his old friend Mr. Channing's sake. 'I had better go up to the Guildhall,' he soliloquised, 'and see if ——'

There they were, turning the corner of the

street; Roland Yorke, Hamish, and Arthur; and the tail of followers behind. Mr. Galloway waited till they came up. Hamish did not enter, or stop, but went straight home. 'They will be so anxious for news,' he exclaimed. Not a word had been exchanged between the brothers. 'No wonder that he shuns coming in!' thought Arthur.

Roland Yorke threw his hat from him in silence, and sat down in his place at the desk. Mr. Galloway touched Arthur with his finger, and motioned him towards the private room, and stood there facing him, speaking gravely:—

'Tell me the truth, as before God. Are you innocent or guilty? What you say shall not be used against you.'

Quick as lightning, in all solemn earnestness, the word 'innocent' was on Arthur's lips. It had been better for him, perhaps, that he had spoken it. But, alas, that uncertain perplexity, as to how far he might venture to assert his own exculpation, was upon him still. What impression could this hesitation, coupled with the known suspicious circumstances, make upon the mind of Mr. Galloway?

'Have you *no* answer?' emphatically asked Mr. Galloway.

'I am not guilty, sir.'

Meanwhile, what do you suppose were the sensa-

tions of Mr. Channing? We all know that anguish of mind is far more painful to bear when the body is quiescent, than when it is in motion. In any great trouble, any terrible suspense, look at our sleepless nights! We lie, and toss, and turn, and say, When will the night be gone? In the day we can partially shake it off, walking here, walking there; the brunt of the anguish is lost in the body's exertion.

Mr. Channing could not take this exertion. Lying there always, his days were little better to him than nights, and this strange blow, which had fallen so suddenly and unexpectedly, did nearly overwhelm him. Until that afternoon he would have confidently said that his son might been trusted in a room full of untold gold. He would have said it still, but for Arthur's manner; it was that which staggered him. More than one urgent message had been dispatched for Mr. Galloway, but that gentleman was unable to go to him until late in the evening.

'My friend,' said Mr. Galloway, bending over the sofa, when they were left alone, 'I am more grieved at this than you can be.'

Mr. Channing clasped his hand. 'Tell me what you think yourself; the simple truth, unglossed over; I ask it, Galloway, by our long friendship. Do you deem him innocent or guilty?'

There might be no subterfuge in the answer to words so earnest, and Mr. Galloway did not attempt any. He bent lower, and spoke in a whispered tone. 'I believe him to be guilty.'

Mr. Channing closed his eyes, and his lips momentarily moved. A word of prayer, to be helped *to bear*, was going up to the throne of God.

'But, never think that it was I who instituted these proceedings against him,' resumed Mr. Galloway. 'When I called in Butterby to my aid this morning, I had no more notion that it was Arthur Channing who was guilty, than I had that it was that—that sofa of yours. Butterby would have cast suspicion to him then, but I repelled it. He afterwards acted upon his own responsibility while my back was turned. It is as I say often to my office people, I can't stir out for a few hours but something goes wrong! You know the details of the loss?'

'Ay, by heart,' replied Mr. Channing. 'They are suspicious against Arthur, only in so far as that he was alone with the letter. Sufficient time must have been taken, as I conclude, to wet the envelope and unfasten the gum; and it would appear that he alone had that time. This apparent suspicion would have been nothing to my mind, knowing Arthur as I do, had it not been coupled to a suspicious manner.'

'There it is,' assented Mr. Galloway, warmly. 'It is that manner which leaves no room for doubt. I had him with me privately when the examination was over, and begged him to tell me, as before God: innocent or guilty. He could not. He stood like a statue, with a confused face, his eyes down, and his colour varying. He is badly constituted for the commission of crime, for he cannot brave it out. One, knowing himself wrongfully accused, would lay his hand upon his heart, with a bright, upright countenance, and say, I am innocent of this, so help me Heaven! I must confess I did not like his manner yesterday, when he heard me say I should place it in the hands of the police,' continued Mr. Galloway. 'He grew suddenly agitated, and begged I would not.'

'Ay!' cried Mr. Channing, with a groan of pain he could not wholly suppress. 'It is an incredible mystery. What could he want with the money? The tale told, about his having debts, has no foundation; he has positively none.'

Mr. Galloway shook his head; he would not speak out his thoughts. He knew that Hamish was in debt; he knew that Master Roland Yorke indulged in expensive habits whenever he got the opportunity, and he now deemed it likely that Arthur, between the two examples, might have been drawn in. 'I shall not allow my doubts of

him to go further than you,' he said aloud. 'And I shall put a summary stop to the law proceedings.'

'How will you do that, now that they are publicly entered upon?' asked Mr. Channing.

'I'll manage it,' was the reply. 'We'll see which is strongest, I or Butterby.'

When they were gathering together for the reading, that night, Arthur took his place as usual. Mr. Channing looked at him sternly, and spoke sternly—in the presence of them all. 'Will your conscience allow you to join in this?'

How it stung him! Knowing himself innocent; seeing Hamish, the real culprit, basking there in their love and respect, as usual; the unmerited obloquy cast upon him was nearly too painful to bear. He did not answer: he was battling down his rebellious spirit; and the gentle voice of Mrs. Channing rose instead.

'James, there is all the more need for him to join in it, if things be as you fear.' And Mr. Channing applied himself to the reading.

'My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble.'

It was a portion of Scripture but rarely chosen, and, perhaps for that reason, it fell upon Arthur

with greater force. As he listened on, the words brought with them a healing balm; and his chafed, sore spirit was soothed, and grew trusting and peaceful as that of a little child.

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING CALL.

You may possibly be blaming Arthur Channing for meeting this trouble in so sad a spirit. Were such an accusation cast unjustly upon you, you would throw it impatiently off, and stand up for yourself and your innocence in the broad light of day. Even were you debarred, as he was, from speaking out the whole truth, you would never be cast down to that desponding depth, and thereby give a colouring to the doubt cast upon you. Are you thinking this? But you must remember that it was not for *himself* that Arthur was so weighed down. Had he possessed no conception how the note went, he would have met the charge very differently, bearing himself bravely, and flinging their suspicion to the winds. 'You people cannot think *me* guilty,' he might have said; 'my whole previous life is a refutation to the charge.' He would have held up his head and heart cheerfully and hopefully; waiting, and looking for the time when elucidation should come.

No; his grief, his despondency were felt for Hamish. *There* was the fester of the wound. If Arthur Channing had cherished faith in one living being more than in another, it was in his elder brother. He loved him with a lasting love, he revered him as few revere a brother; and the shock was great. He would far rather have fallen down to guilt himself than that Hamish should have fallen. Tom Channing had said, with reference to Arthur, that, if he were guilty, he should never believe in anything again; they might tell him that the cathedral was a house, and not a cathedral, and he should not be surprised. This sort of feeling had come over Arthur. It had disturbed his faith in honour and goodness—it had almost disgusted him with the world. Arthur Channing is not the only one who has found his faith in his fellow-men rudely shaken.

And yet, the first shock over, his mind was busy finding excuses for him. He knew that Hamish had not erred from any base prompting of self-gratification, but from love. You may be inclined to think this a contradiction, for all such promptings to crime must be base. Of course they are; but as the motives differ, so do the degrees of baseness. As sure as though the whole intricacies of the matter had been laid before him, felt Arthur, had Hamish been driven to it in his

desperate need, to save his father's place, and the family's means of support! He felt that, had Hamish alone been in question, he would not have appropriated a pin, that was not his, to save himself from arrest: what he had done he had done in love. Arthur gave him credit for another thing—that he had never cast a glance to the possibility of suspicion falling on Arthur; the post-office would obtain the credit for the loss. Nothing more tangible than that wide field, where they might hunt for the supposed thief until they were tired.

It was a miserable evening that followed the exposure; the precursor of many and many miserable evenings in days to come. Mr. and Mrs. Channing, Hamish, Constance, and Arthur sat in the usual sitting-room when the rest had retired—sat in ominous silence; even Hamish, with his naturally sunny face and his sunny temper, looked gloomy as the grave. Was he deliberating upon whether he should show that all principles of manly justice were not quite dead within him, by speaking up at last, and clearing his wrongfully accused brother? But then—his father's place—his mother's home? all might be forfeited. Who can tell whether this was the purport of Hamish's thoughts as he sat there in abstraction, away from the light, his head upon his hand. *He* did not say.

Arthur rose; the silence was telling upon him. 'May I say good night to you, father?'

'Have you nothing else to say?' asked Mr. Channing.

'In what way, sir?' asked Arthur, in a low tone.

'In the way of explanation. Will you leave me to go to my restless pillow without it? This is the first estrangement which has come between us.'

What explanation *could* he give? But to leave his father suffering in body and in mind, without attempt at it, was a hard pain to bear.

'Father, I am innocent,' he said. It was all he could say; and it was spoken all too quietly.

Mr. Channing gazed at him searchingly. 'In the teeth of appearances?'

'Yes, sir, in the teeth of appearances.'

'Then why—if I am to believe you—have assumed the aspect of guilt, which you certainly have done?'

Arthur involuntarily glanced to Hamish; the thought in his heart was. '*You* know why, if no one else does;' and caught Hamish looking at him stealthily, under cover of his fingers. Apparently, Hamish was annoyed at being so caught, and started up.

'Good night, mother. I am going to bed.'

They wished him good night, and he left the room. Mr. Channing turned again to Arthur.

He took his hand, and spoke with agitation. 'My boy, do you know that I would almost rather have died, than live to see this guilt fall upon you?'

'Oh, father, don't judge me harshly!' he implored. 'Indeed I am innocent.'

Mr. Channing paused. 'Arthur, you never, as I believe, told me a lie in your life. What is this puzzle?'

I am not telling a lie now.'

'I am tempted to believe you. But why, then, act as if you were guilty? When those men came here to-day, you knew what they wanted; you resigned yourself to them, voluntarily, a prisoner. When Mr. Galloway questioned you privately of your innocence, you could not assert it.'

Neither could he now in a more explanatory way than he was doing.

'Can you look in my face and tell me, in all honour, that you know nothing of the loss of the note?'

'All I can say, sir, is, that I did not take it or touch it.'

'Nay, but you are equivocating!' exclaimed Mr. Channing.

Arthur felt that he was, in some measure, and did not gainsay it.

'Are you aware that to-morrow you may be committed for trial on the charge?'

'I know it,' replied Arthur. 'Unless—unless——' he stopped in agitation. 'Unless you will interest yourself with Galloway, and induce him to withdraw the proceedings. Your friendship with him has been close and long, sir, and I think he would do it for you.'

'Would you ask this if you were innocent?' said Mr. Channing. 'Arthur, it is not the public punishment you ought to dread, but the consciousness of meriting it.'

'And that I am not conscious of,' he answered, emphatically, in his bitterness. 'Father! I would lay down my life to shield you from care! think of me as favourably as you can.'

'You will not make me your full confidant?'

'I wish I could! I *wish* I could!'

He wrung his father's hand, and turned to his mother, halting before her. Would she give him her good-night kiss?

Would she? Did a fond mother ever turn against her child? To the prison, to the scaffold, down to the very depths of obloquy and scorn, a loving mother clings to her son. All else may forsake, but she never, be he what he will. Mrs. Channing drew his face to hers, and burst into sobs as she sheltered it on her bosom.

'*You* will have faith in me, my darling mother!'

The words were spoken in the softest whisper. He kissed her tenderly, and hastened from the room, not trusting himself to say good-night to Constance. In the hall he was waylaid by Judith.

'I say, Master Arthur, it isn't true?'

'Of course it is not true, Judith. Don't you know me better?'

'What an old oaf I am for asking, to be sure! Didn't I nurse him, and haven't I watched him grow up, and don't I know my own boys better?' she added to herself, but speaking aloud.

'To be sure you have, Judy.'

'But, Master Arthur, why is the master casting blame to you? And when them insolent police came strutting here to-day, as large as life, in their ugly blue coats and shiny hats, why didn't you hold the door wide, and show 'em out again? I'd never have demeaned myself to go with 'em politely.'

'They wanted me at the town-hall, you know, Judith. I suppose you have heard it all?'

'Then, want should have been their master for me,' retorted Judith. 'I'd never have gone, unless they had got a cord and drawed me. I shouldn't wonder but they fingered the money themselves!'

Arthur made his escape, and went up to his room. He was scarcely within it when Hamish left his chamber and came in. Arthur's heart beat quicker. Was he coming to make a clean breast of it? Not he!

'Arthur,' Hamish began, speaking in a kindly, but an estranged tone—or else Arthur fancied it—'can I serve you in any way in this business?'

'Of course you cannot,' replied Arthur: and he felt vexed with himself that his tone should savour of peevishness.

'I am sorry for it, as you may readily believe, old fellow,' resumed Hamish. 'When I got into the court to-day, you might have knocked me down with a feather.'

'Ay, I should suppose so,' said Arthur. 'You did not expect the charge would be brought upon me.'

'I neither expected it nor believed it when I was told. I inquired of Parkes, the beadle, what unusual thing was going on, seeing so many people about the doors, and he answered that you were under examination. I laughed at him, thinking he was joking.'

Arthur made no reply.

'What can I do for you?' repeated Hamish.

'You can leave me to myself, Hamish. That's

about the kindest thing you can do for me to-night.'

Hamish did not take the hint immediately. 'We must have the accusation quashed, at all hazards,' he went on. 'But my father thinks Galloway will withdraw it. Yorke says he'll not leave a stone unturned to make Helstonleigh believe the money was lost in the post-office.'

'Yorke believes so himself,' reproachfully rejoined Arthur.

'I think most people do, with the exception of Butterby. Confounded old meddler! There would have been no outcry at all, but for him.'

A pause. Arthur did not seem inclined to break it. Hamish had caught up a bit of whalebone, which happened to be lying on the drawers, and was twisting it about in his fingers, glancing at Arthur from time to time. Arthur leaned against the chimney-piece, his hands in his pockets, and, in like manner, glanced at him. Not the slightest doubt in the world that each was wishing to speak out more freely. But some inward feeling restrained them. Hamish broke the silence.

'Then you have nothing to say to me, Arthur?'

'Not to-night.'

Arthur thought the 'saying' should have been on the other side. He had cherished some faint hope that Hamish would at least *acknowledge* the trouble

he had brought upon him. 'I could not help it, Arthur; I was driven to my wit's end; but I never thought of the reproach falling upon you,' or words to that effect. No: nothing of the sort.

Constance was ascending the stairs as Hamish withdrew. 'Can I come in, Arthur?' she asked.

For answer, he opened the door and drew her inside. 'Has Hamish spoken of it?' she whispered.

'Not a word—as to his own share in it. He asked, in a general way, if he could serve me. Constance,' he feverishly added, 'they do not suspect down-stairs, do they?'

'Suspect what?'

'That it was Hamish.'

'Of course they do not. They suspect you. At least, papa does. He cannot make it out; he never was so puzzled in all his life. He says you must either have taken the money, or connived at its being taken: to believe otherwise, would render your manner perfectly inexplicable. Oh, Arthur, he is so grieving! He says other troubles have arisen without fault on our part; but this, the greatest, has been brought by guilt.'

'There is no help for it,' wailed Arthur. 'I could only clear myself at the expense of Hamish, and it would be worse for them to grieve for him

than for me. Bright, sunny Hamish! whom my mother has, I believe, in her heart, loved the best of all of us. Thank you, Constance, for keeping my counsel.'

'How unselfish you are, Arthur!'

'Unselfish! I don't see it as a merit. It is my simple duty to be so in this. If I, by a rash word of complaint, directed suspicion to Hamish, and our home in consequence got broken up, who would be the selfish one then?'

'There's the consideration which frightens and fetters us. Papa must have been thinking of that, when he thanked God that the trouble had not fallen upon Hamish.'

'Did he do that?' asked Arthur, eagerly.

'Yes, just now. "Thank God that this cloud did not fall upon Hamish!" he exclaimed. "It had been far worse for us then."'

Arthur listened. Had he wanted anything to confirm him in the sacrifice he was making, those words of his father's would have done it. Mr. Channing had no greater regard for one son than for the other; but he knew, as well as his children, how much depended upon Hamish.

The tears were welling up into the eyes of Constance. 'I wish I could speak comfort to you!' she whispered.

'Comfort will come with time, I daresay, darling.

Don't stay. I seem quite fagged out to-night, and would be alone.'

Ay, alone. Alone with his grief and with God.

To bed at last, but not to sleep; not for hours and for hours. His anxiety of mind was intense, chiefly for Hamish; though he endured some on his own score. To be pointed at as a thief in the town, stung him to the quick, even in anticipation; and there was also the uncertainty as to the morrow's proceedings; for all he knew, they might end in the prosecution being carried on, and his committal for trial. Towards morning, he dropped into a heavy sleep; and, to awake from that, was the worst of all; for his troubles came pressing upon his brain with tenfold poignancy.

He rose and dressed, in some perplexity—perplexity as to the immediate present. Ought he, or ought he not, to go as usual to Mr. Galloway's? He really could not tell. If Mr. Galloway believed him guilty—and there was little doubt of that, now—of course he could no longer be tolerated in the office. On the other hand, to stop away voluntarily, might look like an admission of guilt.

He determined to go, and did so. It was the early morning hour, when he had the office to himself. He got through his work—the copying of a somewhat elaborate will—and returned home to breakfast. He found Mr. Channing had risen,

which was not usual. Like Arthur, his night had been an anxious one, and the bustle of the breakfast-room was more tolerable than bed. I wonder what Hamish's had been! The meal passed in uncomfortable silence.

A tremendous peal at the hall bell, startling the house, echoing through the Boundaries, astonishing the rooks, and sending them on the wing with a caw! caw! On state occasions it pleased Judith to answer the door herself; her helpmate, over whom she held undisputed sway, ruling her with a tight hand, dared not put herself forward to attempt it. The bell tingled still, and Judy, believing it could be nobody less than the bishop come to alarm them with a matinal visit, hurried on a clean white apron, and stepped across the hall.

Mr. Roland Yorke! Nobody more formidable. He passed Judith with an unceremonious nod, and marched into the breakfast-room.

'Good morning, all! I say, old chap, are you ready to come to the office? It's good to see you down at this early hour, Mr. Channing.'

He was invited to take a seat, but declined; it was time they were at Galloway's, he said. Arthur hesitated.

'I do not know whether Mr. Galloway will expect me,' he observed.

'Not expect you!' flashed Roland, lapsing into

his loud, excited manner. 'I can tell you what, Arthur, if he doesn't expect you, he sha'n't expect me. Mr. Channing, did you ever know anything so shamefully overbearing and unjust as that affair yesterday?'

'Unjust, if it be unfounded,' replied Mr. Channing.

'Unfounded!' uttered Roland. 'If that's not unfounded, there never was an unfounded charge brought yet. I'd answer for Arthur with my own life. I should like to sew up that Butterby! I hope, sir, you'll bring an action against him.'

'You feel it strongly, Mr. Roland.'

'I should hope I do! Look you, Mr. Channing, it is a slur on our office; on me, and on Jenkins, and on Galloway himself. Yes, on Galloway. I say what I mean, and nobody shall talk me down. I'd rather believe it was Galloway did it than Arthur. I shall tell him so.'

'This sympathy evinces very kind feeling on your part, Ro——'

'I declare I shall go mad if I hear that told me again!' interrupted Roland, turning red with passion. 'It makes me wild. Everybody's on with it. "You—are—very—kind—to—take—up—Arthur Channing's—cause!" they mince out. Incorrigible idiots! Kind! Why, Mr. Channing, if that cat of yours there, basking out her long tail in

the sun, were to be accused of swallowing down a mutton chop, and you felt morally certain that she did not do it, wouldn't you stand up for her against punishment?'

Mr. Channing could not forbear a smile at Roland and his hot championship. 'To be "morally certain" may do when cats are in question, Mr. Roland; but the law, unfortunately, requires something more for us, the superior animal. No father living has had more cause to put faith in his children than I. The unfortunate point in this business is, that the loss appears to have occurred so mysteriously, when the letter was in charge of Arthur.'

'Yes, if it had occurred that way: but who believes it did, save a few pates with shallow brains?' retorted Roland. 'The note is burning a hole in the pocket of some poor, ill-paid wight of a letter-carrier; that's where the note is. I beg your pardon, Mr. Channing, but it's of no use to interrupt me with arguments about old Galloway's seal. They go in at one ear and out at the other. What more easy than to put a penknife under the seal, and unfasten it?'

'You cannot do this where gum is used as well: as it was to that letter.'

'Who cares for the gum!' retorted Mr. Roland. 'I don't pretend to say, sir, how it was accom-

plished, but I know it must have been done, somehow. Watch a conjuror at his tricks! You can't *tell* how he gets a shilling out of a box which you yourself put in—all you know is, he does get it out; or how he exhibits some receptacle, crammed full, which you could have sworn was empty. Just so with the letter. The bank-note did get out of it, but we can't tell how, except that it was not through Arthur. Come along, old fellow, or Galloway may be blowing us up for arriving late.'

Twitching Tom's hair as he passed him, treading on the cat's tail, and tossing a branch of sweetbriar full of thorns at Annabel, Mr. Roland Yorke made his way out in a commotion. Arthur, yielding to the strong will, followed. Roland passed his arm within his, and they went towards Close Street.

'I say, old chum, I haven't had a wink of sleep all night, worrying over this bother. My room is over Lady Augusta's, and she sent up this morning to know what I was pacing about for, like a troubled ghost. I woke at four o'clock, and I could not get to sleep after; so I just stamped about a bit, to stamp the time away.'

In a happier mood, Arthur might have laughed at his Irish speech. 'I am glad you stand by me, at any rate, Yorke. I never did it, you know. Here comes Williams. I wonder in what light he

will take up the affair? Perhaps he will turn me from my place in the college.'

'He had better!' flashed Roland. 'I'd "turn" him!'

Mr. Williams appeared to 'take up the affair' in a resentful, haughty sort of spirit, something like Roland, only that he was quieter over it. He cast ridicule to the charge. 'I am astonished at Galloway!' he observed, when he had been speaking with them some moments. 'Should he go on with the case, the town will cry shame upon him.'

'Ah, but you see it was that meddling Butterby, not Galloway,' returned Yorke. 'As if Galloway did not know us chaps in his office better than to suspect us!'

'I fancy Butterby is more fond of meddling than he need be,' said the organist. 'A party in the town, living not a hundred miles from this very spot, was suspected of having made free with a ring, which disappeared from a dressing-table, where she was paying an evening visit; and I declare if Butterby did not put his nose into it, and worm out all the particulars!'

'That she had not taken it?'

'That she had. But it was productive of great annoyance; all parties, even those who lost the ring, would rather have buried it in quiet. It was

hushed up afterwards. Butterby ought to understand people's wishes, before he sets to work.'

'I wish press gangs were in fashion!' emphatically uttered Roland. 'What a nice prize he'd make!'

'I suppose I can depend upon you to take the duty at College this morning?' Mr. Williams said to Arthur as he was leaving them.

'Yes; I shall be out in time for the examination at the Guildhall. The hour fixed is half-past eleven.'

'Old villains the magistrates must have been, to remand it at all!' was the concluding comment of Mr. Roland Yorke.

CHAPTER VI.

CHECKMATED.

Constance Channing proceeded to her duties as usual at Lady Augusta Yorke's. She drew her veil over her face, only to traverse the very short way that conveyed her thither, for the sense of shame was strong upon her conscience; not shame for Arthur, but for Hamish. It had half broken Constance's heart.

There are times in our every-day lives when all things seem to wear a depressing aspect, turn to which side we will. They were wearing it that day to Constance. Apart from home troubles, she felt particularly discouraged in the educational task she had undertaken. You heard the promise made to her by Caroline Yorke to be up and ready for her every morning at seven. Caroline kept it for two mornings, and then failed. This morning and the previous morning Constance had been there at seven, and returned home without getting to see either of the children. Both were ready for her when she entered now.

'How am I to deal with you?' she said to Caroline, in a sad but affectionate tone. 'I do not wish to *force* you to obey me; I would prefer that you should do it cheerfully.'

'It is tiresome to get up early,' responded Caroline. 'I can't wake when Martha comes.'

'Whether Martha goes to you at seven, or at eight, or at nine, she has the same trouble to get you up.'

'I don't see any good in getting up early,' cried Caroline.

'Do you see any good in acquiring good habits, instead of bad ones?' asked Constance.

'But, Miss Channing, why need we learn to get up early? We are ladies. It's only the poor who need get up at unseasonable hours—those who have their living to get.'

'Is it only the poor who are accountable to God for waste of time, Caroline?'

Caroline paused. She did not like to give up her argument. 'It's so very low-lived to get up with the sun; I don't think real ladies ever do it.'

'You think "real ladies" wait until the sun has been up a few hours and warmed the pavement for them?'

'Y—es,' said Caroline. But it was not spoken very readily, for she had a suspicion that Miss Channing was laughing at her.

'May I ask where you have acquired your notions of "real ladies," Caroline?'

Caroline pouted. 'Don't you call Colonel Joliffe's daughters ladies, Miss Channing?'

'Yes—in position.'

'That's where we went yesterday, you know. Mary Joliffe says she never gets up till half-past eight, and that it is not lady-like to get up earlier. Real ladies don't, Miss Channing.'

'My dear, shall I relate to you a pretty anecdote that I have heard?'

'Oh, yes!' replied Caroline, her listless mood changing to animation; anecdotes, or anything in that desultory way, being far more acceptable to the young lady than lessons.

'Before I begin, will you tell me whether you condescend to admit that our good Queen is a "real lady?"'

'Oh, Miss Channing, now you are laughing at me! As if any of us, in all England, could be so great a lady as the Queen.'

'Very good. When she was a little girl, a child of her own age, the daughter of one of the nobility, was brought to Kensington Palace to spend the day with her. In talking together, the Princess Victoria mentioned something she had seen when out of doors that morning at seven o'clock. "At seven o'clock!" exclaimed the young visitor; "how

early that is to be abroad! I never get out of bed until eight. Is there any use in rising so early?" The Duchess of Kent, who was present, took up the answer: "My daughter may be called to fill the throne of England when she shall be grown up; therefore, it is especially necessary that she should learn the full value of time." You see, Caroline, the princess was not allowed to waste her mornings in bed, although she was destined to be the first lady in the land. We may be thankful to her admirable mother for making her in that, as in many other things, a pattern to us.'

'Is it a true anecdote, Miss Channing?'

'It was related to my mother, many years ago, by a lady who was, at that time, much at Kensington Palace. I think there is little doubt of its truth. One fact we all know, Caroline: that the Queen retains her early habits, and implants them upon her children. What do you suppose would be her Majesty's surprise, were one of her daughters—say, the Princess Helena, or the Princess Louise—to decline rising early for their morning studies with their governess, Miss Hildyard, on the plea that it was not "lady-like?"'

Caroline's ground of objection appeared to be melting away under her. 'But it is a dreadful plague,' she grumbled, 'to be obliged to get up from one's nice warm bed, for the sake of some horrid old lessons!'

'You spoke of "the poor"—those who "have their living to get"—as the only class who need rise betimes,' resumed Constance. 'Put that notion away from you at once and for ever, Caroline; there cannot be a more false one. The higher we go in the scale of life, the more onerous become our duties in this world, and the greater is our responsibility to God. He to whom five talents were intrusted, did not make them other five by wasting his days in idleness. Oh, Caroline!—Fanny, dear, come you closer and listen to me—your time and opportunities for good must be *used* —not abused or wasted.'

'I *will* try and get up,' said Caroline, repentantly. 'I wish mamma had trained me to it when I was a child, as the Duchess of Kent trained the princess! I might have learned to like it by this time.'

'Long before this,' said Constance. 'Do you remember the good old saying, "Do what you ought, that you may do what you like?" Habit is second nature. Were I told that I might lie in bed every morning till nine or ten o'clock, as a great favour, I should consider it a great punishment.'

'But I have not been trained to get up, Miss Channing; and it is nothing short of punishment to me to do so.'

'The punishment of self-denial we all have to

bear, Caroline. But I can tell you what will take off half its sting.'

'What?' asked Caroline, eagerly.

Constance bent towards her. 'Jesus Christ said, "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." When once we learn HOW to take it up cheerfully, bravely, for his sake, looking to him to be helped, the sting is gone. "No cross, no crown," you know, my children.'

'No cross, no crown!' Constance had enough of cross to carry just then. In the course of the morning Lady Augusta came into the room boisterously, her manner indicative of great surprise.

'Miss Channing, what *is* this tale, about your brother's having been arrested for stealing that missing bank-note? Some visitors have just called in upon me, and they say the town is ringing with the news.'

It was one of the first of Constance Channing's bitter pills; they were to be her portion for many a day. Her heart fluttered, her cheek varied, and her answer to Lady Augusta Yorke was low and timid.

'It is true that he was arrested yesterday on suspicion.'

'What a shocking thing! Is he in prison?'

'Oh, no.'

'Did he take the note?'

The question pained Constance worse than all. 'He did not take it,' she replied, in a clear, soft tone. 'To those who know Arthur well, it would be impossible to think he did.'

'But he was before the magistrates yesterday, I hear, and is going up again to-day.'

'Yes, that is so.'

'And Roland could not open his lips to tell me of this when I came home last night!' grumbled the lady. 'We were late, and he was the only one up; Gerald and Tod were in bed. I shall ask him why he did not. But, Miss Channing, this must be a dreadful blow for you all.'

'It would be a worse, Lady Augusta, if we believed him guilty,' she replied from her aching heart.

'Oh, dear! I hope he is not guilty!' continued the lady, displaying as little delicacy of feeling as she could well do. 'It would be quite a dangerous thing, you know, for my Roland to be in the same office.'

'Be at ease, Lady Augusta,' returned Constance, with a tinge of irony she could not wholly suppress. 'Your son will incur no harm from the companionship of Arthur.'

'What does Hamish say? handsome Hamish!

He does not deserve that such a blow should come near him.'

Constance felt her colour deepen. She bent her face, by way of hiding it, over the exercise she was correcting.

'Is he likely to be cleared of the charge?' perseveringly resumed Lady Augusta.

'Not by actual proof, I fear,' answered Constance, pressing her hand upon her brow as she remembered that he could only be proved innocent by another's being proved guilty. 'The note seems to have been lost in so very mysterious a manner, that positive proof of his exoneration will be difficult.'

'Well, it is a dreadful thing!' concluded Lady Augusta.

Meanwhile, at the very moment her ladyship was speaking, the magistrates were in the town-hall in full conclave—the case before them. The news had spread—had excited interest far and wide; the bench was crowded, and the court was one dense mass of heads.

Arthur appeared, escorted by his brother Hamish and by Roland Yorke. Roland was in high feather, throwing his haughty glances everywhere, for he had an inkling of what was to be the termination of the affair, and did not conceal his triumph. Mr. Galloway also was of their party.

Mr. Galloway was the first witness put forth by Mr. Butterby. The latter gentleman was in high feather also, like Roland, believing he saw his way clear to a triumphant conviction. Mr. Galloway was questioned; and for some minutes it all went on swimmingly.

'On the afternoon of the loss, before you closed your letter, who was in your office?'

'My clerks—Roland Yorke and Arthur Channing.'

'They saw the letter, I believe?'

'They did,'

'And the bank-note?'

'Most probably.'

'It was the prisoner, Arthur Channing, who fetched the bank-note from your private room to the other one? Did he see you put it into the letter?'

'I cannot say.'

A halt. 'But he was in full possession of his eyes just then.'

'No doubt he was.'

'Then what should hinder his seeing you put the note into the letter?'

'I will not swear that I put the note into the letter.'

The magistrates pricked up their ears. Mr. Butterby pricked up his, and looked at the witness.

'What do you say?'

'I will not swear that I put the bank-note inside the letter,' deliberately repeated Mr. Galloway.

'Not swear that you put the bank-note into the letter? What is it that you mean?'

'The meaning is plain enough,' replied Mr. Galloway, calmly. 'Must I repeat it for the third time? I will not swear that I put the note into the letter.'

'But your instructions to me were that you did put the note into the letter,' cried Mr. Butterby, interrupting the examination.

'I will not swear it,' reiterated the witness.

'Then there's an end of the case!' exclaimed the magistrates' clerk, in some choler. 'What on earth was the time of the bench taken up for in bringing it here?'

And there *was* an end of the case—at any rate, for the present—for nothing more satisfactory could be got out of Mr. Galloway.

'I have been checkmated,' ejaculated the angry Butterby.

They walked back arm-in-arm to Mr. Galloway's, Roland and Arthur. Hamish went the other way, to his own office, and Mr. Galloway lingered somewhere behind. Jenkins—true-hearted Jenkins, in the black handkerchief still

—was doubly respectful to Arthur, and rose to welcome him; a faint hectic of pleasure illumining his face at the termination of the charge.

'Who said our office was going to be put down for a thief's!' uttered Roland. 'Old Galloway's a trump! Here's your place, Arthur.'

Arthur did not take it. He had seen from the window the approach of Mr. Galloway, and delicacy prevented his assuming his old post until bade to do so. Mr. Galloway came in, and motioned him into his own room.

'Arthur Channing,' he said, 'I have acted leniently in this unpleasant matter, for your father's sake; but, from my very heart, I believe you to be guilty.'

'I thank you, sir,' Arthur said, 'for that and all other kindness. I am not as guilty as you deem me. Do you wish me to leave?'

'If you can give me no better assurance of your innocence—if you can give me no explanation of the peculiar and most unsatisfactory manner in which you have met the charge—yes. To retain you here would be unjust to my own interests, and unfair as regards Jenkins and Roland Yorke.'

To give this explanation was impossible; neither dared Arthur assert more emphatically his innocence. Once convince Mr. Galloway that he was not the guilty party, and that gentleman would

forthwith issue fresh instructions to Butterby for the further investigation of the affair: of this Arthur felt convinced. He could only be silent and remain under the stigma.

'Then—I had better—you would wish me, perhaps—to go at once,' hesitated Arthur.

'Yes,' shortly replied Mr. Galloway.

He spoke a word of farewell, which Mr. Galloway replied to by a nod, and went into the front office. There he began to collect together certain trifles that belonged to him.

'What's that for?' asked Roland Yorke.

'I am going,' he replied.

'Going!' roared Roland, jumping to his feet, and dashing down his pen full of ink, with little regard to the deed he was copying. 'Galloway has never turned you off!'

'Yes, he has.'

'Then I'll go too!' thundered Roland, who, truth to say, had flown into an uncontrollable passion, startling Jenkins and arousing Mr. Galloway. 'I'll not stop in a place where that sort of injustice goes on! He'll be turning me out next! Catch me stopping for it!'

'Are you taken crazy, Mr. Roland Yorke?'

The question proceeded from his master, who came forth to make it. Roland turned to him, his temper unsubdued, and his colour rising.

'Channing never took the money, sir! It is not just to turn him away.'

'Did you help him to take it, pray, that you identify yourself with the affair so persistently and violently?' demanded Mr. Galloway, in a cynical tone. And Roland answered with a hot and haughty word.

'If you cannot attend to your business a little better, you will get your dismissal from me; you won't require to dismiss yourself,' said Mr. Galloway. 'Sit down, sir, and go on with your work.'

'And that's all the thanks a fellow gets for taking up a cause of oppression!' muttered Mr. Roland Yorke, as he sullenly resumed his place at the desk. 'This is a precious world to live in!'

CHAPTER VII.

A PIECE OF PREFERMENT.

BEFORE the nine days' wonder, which, you know, is said to be the accompaniment of all marvels, had died away, Helstonleigh was fated to be astonished by another piece of news of a different nature—the preferment of the Reverend William Yorke.

A different preferment from what had been anticipated for him; otherwise, the news had been nothing extraordinary, for it is customary for the Dean and Chapter to provide livings for their minor canons. In a fine, open part of the town was a cluster of buildings, called Hazeldon's Charity, so named from its founder, Sir Thomas Hazeldon—a large, paved inclosure, fenced in by iron railings and a pair of iron gates. A chapel stood in the midst. On either side, right and left, ran sixteen almshouses, and, at the top, opposite to the iron gates, stood the dwelling of the chaplain to the charity, a superior residence, called Hazeldon House. This preferment, worth three hundred

pounds a-year, had been for some weeks vacant, the chaplain having died. It was in the gift of the present baronet, Sir Frederick Hazeldon, a descendant of the founder, and he now suddenly conferred it upon the Reverend William Yorke. It took Helstonleigh by surprise. It took Mr. Yorke himself entirely by surprise. He possessed no interest whatever with Sir Frederick, and had never cast a thought to the probability of its becoming his. Perhaps, Sir Frederick's motive for bestowing it upon him was this—that, of all the clergy in the neighbourhood, looking out for something good to drop to them, Mr. Yorke had been nearly the only one who had not solicited it of Sir Frederick.

Its coming was none the less welcome. It would not interfere in the least with the duties or preferment of his minor canonry; a minor canon had once before held it. In short, it was one of those slices of luck which do sometimes come unexpectedly in this world.

In the soft light of the summer evening, Constance Channing stood under the cedar-tree. A fine old tree was that, making the boast of the Channings' garden. The sun was setting in all its gorgeous beauty, clouds of crimson and purple floated on the horizon, their gold edges dazzling the eye; a roseate hue pervaded the atmosphere,

and lighted with its own loveliness the sweet face of Constance. It was an evening that seemed to speak peace to the soul—so would it have spoken to that of Constance, but for the ever-present trouble which had fallen there.

Another trouble was falling upon her, or seemed to be; one that more immediately concerned herself. Since the disgrace had come to Arthur, Mr. Yorke had been less frequent in his visits. Some days had now elapsed from the time of Arthur's dismissal from Mr. Galloway's, and Mr. Yorke had called but once. This might have arisen from accidental circumstances, but Constance felt a different fear in her heart.

Hark! that is his ring at the hall-bell. Constance has not listened for and loved that ring so long, to be mistaken now. Another minute, and she hears those footsteps approaching, warming her life-blood, quickening her pulses; the rosy hue on her face deepens to crimson, as she turns it towards him. She knows nothing yet of his appointment to the Hazeldon chaplaincy; Mr. Yorke has not known it himself two hours.

He came up and laid his hands upon her shoulders playfully, looking down at her. 'What will you give me for some news, by way of greeting, Constance?'

'News?' she answered, raising her eyes to his,

and scarcely knowing what she did say, in the confusion of meeting him, in her all-conscious love. 'Is it good or bad?'

'Helstonleigh will not call it good, I expect. There are those upon whom it will fall like a thunder-clap.'

'Tell it me, William; I cannot guess,' she said, somewhat wearily. 'I suppose it does not concern me.'

'But it does concern you—at second hand.'

Poor Constance, timorous and full of dread since the grief had fallen, was but too apt to connect everything with that one source. We have done the same in our lives, all of us, when under the consciousness of some secret terror. She appeared to be living upon a mine, which might explode any hour and bring down Hamish in the *débris*. The words bore an ominous sound; and, foolish as it may appear to us, who know the nature of Mr. Yorke's news, Constance fell into a sudden panic, and turned white.

'Does—does—it concern Arthur?' she uttered.

'No. Constance,' changing his tone, and dropping his hands as he gazed at her, 'why should you be so terrified for Arthur? You have been a changed girl since that happened—shrinking, timid, starting at every sound, unable to look people in the face. Why so, if he is innocent?'

She shivered inwardly, as was perceptible to the eyes of Mr. Yorke. 'Tell me the news,' she answered, in a low tone, 'if, as you say, it concerns me.'

'I hope it will concern you, Constance. At any rate, it concerns me. The news,' he gravely added, 'is, that I am appointed to the Hazeldon chaplaincy.'

'Oh, William!' The sudden revulsion of feeling, from intense, undefined terror to joyful surprise, was too much to bear calmly. Her emotion overpowered her, and she burst into tears. Mr. Yorke compelled her to sit down on the garden bench, and stood over her—his arm on her shoulder, her hand clasped in his.

'Constance, what is the cause of this?' he asked, when her emotion had passed.

She evaded the question. She dried her tears and smoothed her face to smiles, and tried to look as unconscious as she might. 'Is it really true that you have the chaplaincy!' she questioned.

'I received my appointment to it this evening. Why Sir Frederick should have conferred it upon me I am unable to say: I feel all the more obliged to him for its being unexpected. Shall you like the house, Constance?'

The rosy hue stole over her cheeks again, and a

happy smile parted her lips. 'I once said to mamma, when we had been spending the evening there, that I should like to live at Hazeldon House. I like its situation; I like its rooms; I shall like to be busy among all those poor old people. But, when I said it, William, I had not the slightest idea that the chance would ever be mine.'

'You have only to determine now how soon the "chance" shall become certainty,' he said. 'I must take up my residence there within a month, and I do not care how soon my wife takes up hers, after that.'

The rose grew deeper. She bent her brow down upon her hand and his, hiding her face. 'It could not possibly be, William.'

'What could not?'

'So soon. Papa and mamma are going to Germany, you know, and I must keep house here. Besides, what would Lady Augusta say at my leaving her situation almost as soon as I have entered upon it?'

'Lady Augusta ——' Mr. Yorke was beginning impulsively, but checked himself. Constance lifted her face and looked at him. His brow was knit, and a stern expression had settled on it.

'What is it, William?'

'I want to know what caused your grief just

now,' was his abrupt rejoinder, 'and what it is that has made you appear so strange of late.'

The words fell on her like an icebolt. For a few brief moments she had forgotten her fears, had revelled in the sunshine of the prospective happiness so suddenly laid out before her. Back came the gloom, the humiliation, the sick terror.

'Had Arthur been guilty of the charge laid to him, and you cognisant of it, I could fancy that your manner would be precisely what it is,' answered Mr. Yorke.

Her heart beat wildly. He spoke in a reserved, haughty tone, and she felt a foreboding that some unpleasant explanation was at hand. She felt more—that perhaps she ought not to become his wife with this cloud hanging over them. She nerved herself to say what she deemed she ought to say.

'William,' she began, 'perhaps you would wish that our marriage should be delayed, until—until—I mean now that this suspicion has fallen upon Arthur?'

She could scarcely get the incoherent words out, so great was her agitation. Mr. Yorke saw how white and trembling were her lips.

'I cannot believe Arthur guilty,' was his reply.

She remembered that Hamish was, though Arthur was not; and, in point of disgrace, it

amounted to the same thing. Constance passed her hand over her perplexed brow. 'He is looked upon as guilty by many; that, we unfortunately know; and it may not be thought well that you should, under the circumstance, make me your wife. *You* may not think it so.'

Mr. Yorke made no reply. He may have been deliberating upon the question.

'Let us put it in this light, William,' she resumed, her tone one of intense pain. 'Suppose, for argument's sake, that Arthur were guilty; would you marry me freely, all the same?'

'It is a hard question, Constance,' he said, after a pause.

'It must be answered.'

'Were Arthur guilty, and you cognisant of it—screening him—I should lose half my confidence in you, Constance.'

That was the knell. Her heart and her eyes alike fell, and she knew, in that one moment, that all hope of marrying William Yorke was gone.

'You think that, were he guilty—I am speaking only for argument's sake,' she breathed in her emotion, 'you think, were I cognisant of it, I ought to betray him; to make it known to the world?'

'I do not say that, Constance. No. But you are my affianced wife; and, whatever cognisance of the matter you might possess, whatever might

be the mystery attending it—and a mystery I believe there is—you should repose the confidence and the mystery in me.'

'That you might decide whether or not I am worthy to be your wife!' she exclaimed, a flash of indignation lighting up her spirit. To doubt her! She felt it keenly. Oh, that she could have told him the truth! but she dared not, for Hamish's sake.

He took her hand in his; he laid the other upon it; he gazed searchingly into her face. 'Constance, you know what you are to me. This unhappy business has been as great a trial to me as to you. Can you deny to me all cognisance of its mystery, its guilt? I ask not whether Arthur be innocent or guilty; I ask whether you are innocent of partisanship in the concealment. Can you stand before me and assure me, in all truth, that you are so?'

She could not. 'I believe in Arthur's innocence,' she replied, in a low tone.

So did Mr. Yorke, or he might not have rejoined as he did. 'I believe also in his innocence,' he said. 'Otherwise——'

'You would not make me your wife. Speak it without hesitation, William.'

'Well—I cannot tell what my course would be. Perhaps I would not.'

A silence. Constance was feeling the avowal

in all its bitter humiliation. It seemed to humiliate *her*. 'No, no; it would not be right of him to make me his wife now,' she reflected. 'Hamish's disgrace may come out any day; he may be brought to trial for it yet. His wife's brother! and he a cathedral clergyman. No, it would never do. William,' she said, aloud, 'we must part.'

'Part?' echoed Mr. Yorke, as the words issued faintly from her trembling lips.

The tears rose to her eyes; it was with difficulty she kept them from falling. 'I cannot become your wife while this cloud overhangs Arthur. It would not be right.'

'You say you believe in his innocence,' was the reply of Mr. Yorke.

'I do. But the world does not. William,' she continued, placing her hand in his, while the tears rained freely down her face, 'let us say farewell now.'

He drew her closer to him; he dried the tears from her face. 'Explain this mystery, Constance. Why are you not open with me? What has come between us?'

'I cannot explain,' she sobbed. 'There is nothing for us but to part.'

'We will not part. Why should we, when you say Arthur is innocent, and I believe him to be so? Constance, my darling, what is this grief?'

What were the words but a tacit admission that, if Arthur were not innocent, they should part? Constance so interpreted them. Had any additional weight been needed to strengthen her resolution, this would have supplied it.

'Farewell! farewell, William! To remain with you is but prolonging the pain of parting.'

That her resolution to part was fixed, he saw. It was his turn to be angry now. A slight touch of the haughty Yorke temper was in him, and there were times when it peeped out. He folded his arms, and the flush left his countenance.

'I cannot understand you, Constance. I cannot fathom your motive, or why you are doing this; unless it be that you never cared for me.'

'I have cared for you as I never cared for any one; as I shall never care for another. To part with you will be like parting with life.'

'Then why speak of it? Be my wife, Constance; be my wife!'

'No, it might bring you disgrace,' she hysterically answered; and, that, you shall never encounter through me. Do not keep me, William; my resolution is irrevocable.'

Sobbing as though her heart would break, she turned from him. Mr. Yorke followed her indoors. In the hall stood Mrs. Channing. Con-

stance turned aside, anywhere, to hide her face from her mother's eye. Mrs. Channing did not particularly observe her, and turned to accost Mr. Yorke. An angry frown was on his brow, an angry weight on his spirit. Constance's words and course of action had now fully impressed him with the belief that Arthur was guilty; that she knew him to be so; and the proud Yorke blood within him whispered that it was *well* so to part. But he had loved her with a deep and enduring love, and his heart ached bitterly.

'Will you come in and lend a helping hand in the discussion?' Mrs. Channing said to him, with a smile. 'We are carving out the plan for our journey.'

He bowed, and followed her into the sitting-room. He did not speak of what had just occurred, leaving that to Constance, if she should choose to give an explanation. It was not Mr. Yorke's place to say, 'Constance has given me up. She has impressed me with the conviction that Arthur is guilty, and she says she will not bring disgrace upon me.' No, certainly; he could not tell them that.

Mr. Channing lay as usual on his sofa, Hamish near him. Gay Hamish, who was looking as light-faced as ever; undoubtedly, he seemed as light-hearted. Hamish had a book before him, a

map, and a pencil. He was tracing out the route of his father and mother, joking always.

After much anxious consideration, *pro* and *con*, Mr. Channing had determined to proceed at once to Germany. It is true that he could not well afford to do so; and, before he heard from Dr. Lamb the very insignificant cost it would prove, he had been in the habit of putting it out of view, as wholly impracticable at present. But the information given him by the doctor changed his views, and he began to think it not only practicable, but feasible. His children were giving much help now to meet home expenses—Constance, in going to Lady Augusta's; Arthur, to the Cathedral. Dr. Lamb strongly urged his going, and Mr. Channing himself knew that, if he could but come home restored to health and to activity, the journey, instead of being a cost, would, in point of fact, prove a saving. With much deliberation, with much prayer to be helped to a right decision, Mr. Channing at length made it—to go.

It was necessary to start at once, for the season was already advanced; indeed, as Dr. Lamb observed, he ought to have been away a month back. Then all was bustle and preparation. Two or three days were wasted in the unhappy business concerning Arthur. But all the grieving over

that, all the staying at home for it, could do no good; Mr. Channing was fain to see that it could not, and the preparations were hastened. Hamish was most active in all—in urging the departure, in helping at the packing, in carrying out their route; joking, I say, always.

'Now, mind, mother, as you are to be manager in chief, it is the *Antwerp* packet you are to take,' he was saying, in a serio-comic, dictatorial manner. 'Don't you get seduced on to any indiscriminate steamer, or you may find yourselves carried off to some unknown regions inhabited by cannibals, and never be heard of more. The Antwerp steamer, and it starts from St. Katherine's Docks —if you have the pleasure of knowing that enchanting part of London. I made acquaintance with it in a fog, in that sight-seeing visit I paid to town; and its beauty, I must confess, did not impress me. From St. Katherine's Docks you will reach Antwerp in eighteen hours, which is an average passage—always provided the ship's bottom does not come out.'

'Hamish!'

'Well, I'll not anticipate: I daresay it is well caulked. At any rate, take an insurance ticket against accident, and then you'll be all right. An Irishman slept at the top of a very high hotel. "Are you not afraid to sleep up there, in case of

fire?" a friend asked him. "By the powers, no," said he; "they tell me the house is insured." Now, mother, mine——'

'Shall we have to stay in Antwerp, Hamish?' interrupted Mr. Channing.

'Yes, as you return, sir; which answer you will think emanated from our Irish friend. Nobody ever went to Antwerp yet, without giving the glorious old town a few hours' inspection. I only wish the chance were offered me! Now, as you go, you will not be able to get about; but, as you return, you will—if all the good has been done you that I anticipate.'

'Do not be too sanguine, Hamish.'

'My dear father,' and Hamish's tone assumed a deeper feeling, 'to be sanguine was implanted in my nature at my birth: but in this case I am more than sanguine. You will be cured, depend upon it. When you return, in three months' time, I shall not have a fly waiting for you at the station here, or, if I do, it will be for the mother's exclusive use and benefit; I shall parade you through the town on my arm, showing your renewed strength of leg and limb to the delighted eyes of Helstonleigh.'

'Why are you so silent?' Mrs. Channing inquired of William Yorke. She had suddenly noticed that he had scarcely said a word; that

he had sat in a fit of abstraction since his entrance.

'Silent? Oh! Hamish is talking for all of us,' he answered, starting from his reverie.

'The ingratitude that people possess!' ejaculated Hamish. 'Is he saying that in a spirit of complaint, now? Mr. Yorke, I am astonished at you.'

At this moment Tom was heard to enter the house. That it could be nobody but Tom was undoubted, by the noise and commotion; the others were quieter, except Annabel, and she was a girl. Tom it was, and he came in, tongue, and hands, and feet, all going together.

'What luck, is it not, Mr. Yorke? I am so glad it's you who has got it!'

Mr. Channing looked up with surprise. 'Tom, you will never learn good manners! Got what?'

'Has he not told you?' exclaimed Tom, entirely ignoring the reproof as to his manners. 'He is appointed to Hazeldon Chapel. Where's Constance? I'll be bound he has told *her!*'

Saucy Tom! They received his news in silence, looking to Mr. Yorke for explanation. He rose from his chair, and his cheek slightly flushed as he confirmed the tidings.

'Does Constance know it?' inquired Mrs. Channing, speaking in the moment's impulse.

'Yes,' was Mr. Yorke's short answer. And then he said something, not very coherent, about having an engagement, and took his leave, wishing Mr. Channing every benefit from his journey.

'But we do not go until the day after to-morrow,' objected Mr. Channing. 'We shall see you before that.'

Another unsatisfactory sentence from Mr. Yorke, that he 'was not sure.' In shaking hands with Mrs. Channing he bent down with a whisper: 'I think Constance has something to say to you.'

Mrs. Channing found her in her room, in a sad state of distress. 'Child! what is this?' she uttered.

'Oh! mother, mother, it is all at an end, and we have parted for ever!' was poor Constance's wailed-out answer. And Mrs. Channing, feeling quite sick with the various troubles that seemed to be coming upon her, inquired *why* it was at an end.

'He feels that the disgrace which has fallen upon us would be reflected upon him, were he to make me his wife. Mother, there is no help for it: it *would* disgrace him.'

'But where there is no real guilt there can be no real disgrace,' objected Mrs. Channing. 'I am firmly persuaded, however mysterious and un-

satisfactory things appear, that Arthur is not guilty, and that time will prove he is not.'

Constance could only shiver and sob. Knowing what she knew, she could entertain no hope.

'Poor child! poor child!' murmured Mrs. Channing, her tears dropping upon the fair young face, as she gathered it to her sheltering bosom. 'What have you done that this blight should extend to you?'

'Teach me to bear it, mother. It must be God's will.' And Constance Channing lay in her resting-place, and there sobbed out her heart's grief, as she had used to do in her early girlhood.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN APPEAL TO THE DEAN.

THE first brunt of the edge worn off, Arthur Channing partially recovered his cheerfulness. The French have a proverb, which is familiar to all of us, in these *French* days, when everybody knows the language, or professes to know it—'*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute.*' There is a great deal of truth in it, as experience teaches, and as Arthur found. 'Where is the use of my dependence upon God,' Arthur also reasoned with himself ten times a day, 'if it does not serve to bear me up in this, my first trouble? As well have been brought up next door to a heathen! Why, if I were guilty, I could only be as one ground down to the dust! Let me do the best I can under it, and go my way as if it had not happened, trusting all to God.'

A good resolution, and one that none could have made, and kept, unless he had learnt that good trust, which is the surest beacon light we can

possess in this world. Hour after hour, day after day, did that trust grow in Arthur Channing's heart. He felt a sure conviction that God would bring his innocence to light in His own good time; and that time he was content to wait for. Not at the expense of Hamish. In his brotherly love for Hamish, which this transaction had been unable to dispel, he would have shielded his reputation at any sacrifice to himself. He had grown to excuse Hamish, far more than he could ever have excused himself, had he been guilty of it; he constantly hoped that the sin might never be be brought home to Hamish, even by the remotest suspicion, and that he would never fall again. Hamish was now so kind to Arthur—gentle in manner, considerately thoughtful, anxious to spare him, to resent any rude shaft that might be hurled at him. He had taken to profess his full belief in Arthur's innocence; not as loudly perhaps, but quite as urgently, as did Roland Yorke. 'He would *prove* my innocence, and take the guilt to himself, but that it would bring ruin to my father,' fondly soliloquised Arthur.

Arthur Channing's most earnest desire, for the present, was to obtain some employment. His weekly salary at Mr. Galloway's had been trifling; but still it was so much loss. He had gone to Mr. Galloway's, not so much to be of

help to that gentleman, who really did not require a third clerk, as to get his hand into the routine of the office, against he should be articled. Hence his weekly pay had been almost nominal. Small though it was, he was anxious to replace it; and he sought to hear of something in the town. As yet, without success. Persons were not willing to engage one on whom a doubt rested; and a very great doubt, in the opinion of the town, did rest upon Arthur. The manner in which the case had terminated—by Mr. Galloway's refusing to swear he put the bank-note in the envelope, when it was known that Mr. Galloway *had* put it in, and that Mr. Galloway himself knew that he had put it in—told more against Arthur than the actual charge had done. It was not, you see, establishing Arthur's innocence; on the contrary, it rather tended to imply his guilt. 'If I go on with this, he will be convicted, therefore I will withdraw it for his father's sake,' was the motive of action which the town imputed to Mr. Galloway. His summary dismissal, also, from the office, was urged against him. Altogether, Arthur did not stand well with Helstonleigh; and fresh employment did not readily show itself. This was of little moment, comparatively speaking, while his good place in the Cathedral was not perilled. But that was to come.

On the day previous to the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Channing, Arthur was seated at the organ in afternoon service, playing the anthem, when Mr. Williams came up. Arthur saw him with surprise. It was not the day for practising the choristers; therefore, what could he want? A feeling of dread, that it might bode ill to him, came over Arthur.

Which feeling was borne out all too surely. 'Channing,' Mr. Williams began, scarcely giving himself time to wait until the service was over and the congregation were leaving, 'the dean has been talking to me about this bother. What is to be done?'

The life-blood at his heart seemed to stand still, and then go on again. His place there was about to be taken from him; he knew it. Must he become an idle, useless burden upon them at home?

'He met me this morning in High-street, and stopped me,' continued Mr. Williams. 'He considers that if you were guilty of the theft, you ought not to be allowed to retain your place here. I told him you were not guilty—that I felt thoroughly convinced of it; but he listened coldly. The dean is a strict man, and I have always said it.'

'He is a good man, and only strict in the cause

of injustice,' replied Arthur, who was himself too just to allow blame to rest where it was not due, even though it were to defend himself. 'Did he give orders for my dismissal?'

'He has not done it yet. I said to him, that when a man was accused wrongly, it ought not to be a plea for all the world's trampling him down. He answered pretty warmly to that, that of course it ought not; but that, if appearances might be trusted, you were not accused wrongly.'

Arthur sat, scoring some music with his pencil. Never had he felt that appearances were against him, more plainly than he felt it then.

'I thought I would step down and tell you this, Channing,' Mr. Williams observed. 'I shall not dismiss you, you may be sure of that; but, if the dean puts forth his veto, I cannot help myself. He is master of the Cathedral, not I. I cannot think what possesses the people to doubt you! They would not, if they had ten grains of sense.'

The organist concluded his words as he hurried down the stairs—he was always much pressed for time. Arthur, a cold weight lying at his heart, put the music together, and departed.

He traversed the nave, crossed the body, and descended the steps to the cloisters. As he was passing the Chapter House, the doors opened, and Dr. Gardner came out, in his surplice and trencher. He closed the doors after him, but not before

Arthur had seen the dean seated alone at the table —a large folio before him. Both of them had just left the Cathedral.

Arthur raised his hat to the canon, who acknowledged it, but—Arthur thought—very coldly. To a sore mind, fancy is ever active. A thought flashed over Arthur that he would go, there and then, and speak to the dean.

Acting upon the moment's impulse, without premeditation as to what he should say, he turned back and laid his hand upon the door handle. A passing tremor, as to the result, arose within him; but he had learnt where help in need is ever to be obtained, and an earnestly breathed word went up then. The dean looked round, saw it was Arthur Channing who entered, rose from his seat, and awaited his approach.

'Will you pardon my intruding upon you here, Mr. Dean?' he began, in his gentle, courteous manner; and with the urgency of the occasion, all his energy seemed to come to him. Timidity and tremor vanished, and he stood before the dean, a true gentleman and a fearless one. The dean still wore his surplice, and his trencher lay on the table near him. Arthur placed his own hat by its side. 'Mr. Williams has just informed me that you cast a doubt as to the propriety of my still taking the organ,' he added.

'True,' said the dean. 'It is not fitting that

one, upon whom so heavy an imputation lies, should be allowed to continue his duty in this Cathedral.

'But, sir—if that imputation be a mistaken one?'

'How are we to know that it is a mistaken one?' demanded the dean.

Arthur paused. 'Sir, will you take my word for it? I am incapable of telling a lie. I have come to you to defend my own cause; and yet I can only do it by my bare word of assertion. You are not a stranger to the circumstances of my family, Mr. Dean; and I honestly avow that if this post is taken from me, it will be felt as a serious loss. I have lost what little I had from Mr. Galloway; I trust I shall not lose this.'

'You know, Channing, that I should be the last to do an unjust thing; you also may be aware that I respect your family very much,' was the dean's reply. 'But this crime which has been laid to your charge is a heavy one. If you were guilty of it, it cannot be overlooked.'

'I was not guilty of it,' Arthur impressively said, his tone full of emotion. 'Sir! Mr. Dean! believe me. When I shall come to answer to my Maker for my doings upon earth, I cannot speak with more earnest truth than I now speak to you. I am entirely innocent of the charge. I did not

touch the money; I did not know that the money was lost, until Mr. Galloway announced it to me some days afterwards.'

The dean gazed at Arthur as he stood before him; at his tall form—noble even in its youthfulness—his fine ingenuous countenance, his earnest eye; it was impossible to associate such with the brand of guilt, and the dean's suspicious doubts melted away. If ever uprightness was depicted unmistakably in a human countenance, it shone out then from Arthur Channing's.

'But there appears, then, to be some mystery attaching to the loss, to the proceedings altogether,' debated the dean.

'No doubt there may be; no doubt there is,' was the reply of Arthur. 'Sir,' he impulsively added, 'will you stand my friend, so far as to grant me a boon?'

The dean wondered what he meant.

'Although I have thus asserted my innocence to you; and it is the solemn truth; there are reasons why I do not wish to speak out so unequivocally to others. Will you kindly regard this interview as a confidential one—not speaking of its purport even to Mr. Galloway?'

'But why?' asked the dean.

'I cannot explain. I can only throw myself upon your kindness, Mr. Dean, to grant the re-

quest. Indeed,' he added, his face flushing, 'my motive is an urgent one.'

'The interview was not of my seeking; so you may have your boon,' said the dean. 'But I cannot see why you should not publicly assert it, if, as you say, you are innocent.'

'Indeed, I am innocent,' repeated Arthur. 'Should one ray of elucidation ever be thrown upon the affair, you will see, Mr. Dean, that I have spoken truth.'

'I will accept it as truth,' said the dean. 'You may continue to take the organ.'

'I knew God would be with me in the interview!' thought Arthur, as he thanked the dean and left the Chapter House.

He did not go home immediately. He had a commission to execute in the town, and went to do it. It took him about an hour, which brought it to five o'clock. In returning through the Boundaries he encountered Roland Yorke, just released from that bane of his life, the office, for the day. Arthur told him how near he had been to losing the Cathedral.

'By Jove!' uttered Roland, flying into one of his indignant fits. 'A nice dean he is! He'd deserve to lose his own place, if he had done it.'

'Well, the danger is over for the present. I say, Yorke, does Galloway talk much about it?'

'Not he,' answered Roland. 'He is as sullen and crabbed as any old bear. I say to Jenkins that he is in a passion with himself for having sent you away, and I don't care if he hears me. There's an awful amount to do since you went. I and Jenkins are worked to death. And there'll be the busiest time in all the year coming on soon, with the autumn rents and leases. I shan't stop long in it, I know!'

Smiling at Roland's account of being 'worked to death,' for he knew how much the assertion was worth, Arthur continued his way. Roland continued his, and, on entering his own house, met Constance Channing leaving it. He exchanged a few words of chatter with her, though it struck him that she looked unusually sad, and then found his way to the presence of his mother.

'What an uncommon pretty girl that Constance Channing is!' quoth he, in his free, unceremonious fashion. 'I wonder she condescends to come here to teach the girls!'

'I think I shall dismiss her, Roland,' said Lady Augusta.

'I expect she'll dismiss herself, ma'am, without waiting for you to do it, now William Yorke has got bread and cheese, and a house to eat it in,' returned Roland, throwing himself at full length on a sofa.

'Then you expect wrong,' answered Lady Augusta. 'If Miss Channing leaves, it will be by my dismissal. And I am not sure but I shall do it,' she added, nodding her head.

'What for?' asked Roland, lazily.

'It is not pleasant to retain, as instructress to my children, one whose brother is a thief.'

Roland tumbled off the sofa, and rose up with a great cry—a cry of passionate anger, of aroused indignation. 'What?' he thundered.

'Good gracious! are you going mad?' uttered my lady. 'What is Arthur Channing to you, that you should take up his cause in this startling way, upon every possible occasion?'

'He is this to me—that he has got nobody else to stand up for him,' stuttered Roland, so excited as to impede his utterance. 'We were both in the same office, and the shameful charge might have been cast upon me, as it was cast upon him; it was all chance; luck. Channing is as innocent of it as you, mother; he is as innocent as that precious dean, who has been wondering whether he shall dismiss him from the Cathedral. A charitable lot, you all are!'

'I'm sure I don't want to be uncharitable,' cried Lady Augusta, whose heart was kind enough in the main. 'Half the town says he must be guilty, and what is one to think? Then you would not

recommend me to let it make any difference to Miss Channing's coming here?'

'No!' burst forth Roland, in a tone that might have brought down the roof, had it been glass. 'I'd scorn such wicked injustice.'

'If I were you, I'd "scorn" putting myself into these fiery tempers, upon other people's business,' cried my lady.

'It is my business,' retorted Roland. 'Better go into tempers than be hard and unjust. What would William Yorke say at your speaking so of Miss Channing?'

Lady Augusta smiled. 'It was the hearing what William Yorke had done that nearly decided me. He has broken with Miss Channing. And he has done well, Roland. It is not fit that he should take his wife from a disgraced family. I have been telling him so ever since it happened.'

Roland stood before her, as if unable to digest the news; his mouth open, his eyes staring. 'It is not true!' he shrieked.

'Indeed, it is perfectly true. I gathered a suspicion of it from William Yorke's manner to-day, and I put the question plainly to Miss Channing herself. "Had they parted in consequence of this business of Arthur's?" She acknowledged that it was so.'

Roland turned white with honest anger. He

dashed his hair from his brow, where the moisture stood in drops, like peas. And with an ugly word, which would be more ugly still if written, he dashed down the stairs four at a time, and flung out of the house; probably with the intention of having a little personal explosion with the Reverend William Yorke.

CHAPTER IX.

A TASTE OF 'TAN.'

THE cloisters of Helstonleigh were echoing with the sounds of a loud dispute, according as little with their sacred character, as with the fair beauty of the summer's afternoon.

The excitement caused in the college school by the rumour of Lady Augusta Yorke's having obtained the promise of the head-master that her son should be promoted to the seniorship over the heads of Channing and Huntley, had been smouldering ominously, and gathering all the more strength from the very fact that the boys appeared to be powerless in it. Powerless they were: in spite of Tom Channing's boast at the dinner-table that the school would not stand it tamely, and his meaning nod when Hamish had mockingly inquired whether the school intended to send Lady Augusta a challenge, or to recommend Mr. Pye to the surveillance of the dean.

In the first flow of their indignation, the boys, ringing the changes of rebellion freely, had avowed

to one another that they would acquaint the dean with the head-master's adoption of favouritism, and request his interference—like too many of us do when things happen that annoy us. We are only too prone to speak out our mind; to proclaim what our remedy or revenge shall be. We will do this, or do the other. The boasts seem feasible while our anger lasts, but when that has subsided into reason and coolness, and we see things in their true light, untinged by prejudice, we find that those boasts were but loud talking, and will not do to act upon. Thus it was with the Helstonleigh college boys. They had hurled forth in threats their indignation at the master, they had pretty nearly conned over the very words in which they should make known their grievance to the dean; but when the practical part came to be considered, their courage oozed out at their fingers' ends. The mice, you remember, passed a resolution in solemn conclave that their enemy, the old cat, should be belled: an excellent precaution, and only lacking one little facility to render it an efficient one—no mouse would undertake to do it.

To prefer a complaint to the dean of their head-master was a daring measure; such as the school, with all its hardihood, had never yet attempted. It might recoil upon themselves; might be productive of no benefit to the question at issue, and

only end in making the master their enemy. On the other hand, the boys were fully resolved not to submit tamely to a piece of favouritism so unjust, without doing something. In the midst of this perplexity, one of them suddenly mooted the suggestion that a written memorial should be sent to the head-master from the school collectively, respectfully requesting him to allow the choice of senior to be made in the legitimate order of things, by merit or priority, but not by favour.

Lame as the suggestion was, the majority were for its adoption, simply because no other plan could be hit upon; some were against it. Hot arguments prevailed on both sides, and a few personal compliments, rather tending to break the peace, had been exchanged. The senior boy held himself aloof from acting personally: it was his place they were fighting for. Tom Channing and Huntley were red-hot against what they called the 'sneaking,' meaning the underhand work. Gerald Yorke was equally hot for non-interference, either to the master or the dean. Yorke protested it was not in the least true that Lady Augusta had been promised anything of the sort. In point of fact, there was no proof that she had, except her own assertion, made in the hearing of Jenkins. Gerald gravely declared that Jenkins had gone to sleep and dreamt it.

Affairs had been going on in a cross-grained sort of manner all day. The school, taking it as a whole, had been inattentive; Mr. Pye had been severe; the second master had caned a whole desk, and threatened another, and double lessons had been set the upper boys for the following morning. Altogether, when the gentlemen were released at five o'clock, they were not in the sweetest of tempers, and entered upon a wordy war in the cloisters.

'What possessed you to take and tear up that paper you were surreptitiously scribbling at, when Pye ordered you to go up and hand it in?' demanded Gaunt, of George Brittle. 'It was that which put him out with us all. Was it a love letter?'

'Who was to think he'd go and ask for it?' returned Brittle, an indifferent sort of gentleman, who liked to take things cool and easy. 'Guess what it was.'

'Don't talk to me about guessing!' imperiously spoke Gaunt. 'I ask you what it was.'

'Nothing less than the memorial to himself,' laughed Brittle. 'Some of us made a rough shell of it, and I thought I'd set on and copy it fair. When old Pye's voice came thundering, "What's that you are so stealthily busy over, Mr. Brittle? Hand it in, of course I could only tear it into minute pieces, and pretend to be deaf.'

'You had best not try it on again,' said Gaunt. 'Nothing puts out Pye like disobeying him to his face.'

'Oh, doesn't it, though!' returned Brittle. 'Cribs put him out the worst. He thought that was a crib, or he'd not have been so eager for it.'

'What sort of a shell is it?' asked Harry Huntley. 'Who drew it out?'

'It won't do at all,' interposed Hurst. 'The head of it is, "Revered master," and the tail, "Yours affectionately."'

A shout of laughter; Brittle's voice rose above the noise. 'And the middle is an eloquent piece of composition, calculated to take the master's obdurate heart by storm, and move it to redress our wrongs.'

'We have no wrongs to redress of that sort,' cried Gerald Yorke.

'Being an interested party, you ought to keep your mouth shut,' called out Hurst to Yorke.

'Keep yours shut first,' retorted Yorke to Hurst. 'Not being interested, there's no need to open yours at all.'

'Let's see the thing,' said Huntley.

Brittle drew from his pocket a sheet of a copy-book, tumbled, blotted, scribbled upon with the elegance that only a school-boy can display. Several heads had been laid together, and a sketch of

the memorial drawn out between them. Shorn of what Hurst had figuratively called the head and tail, and which had been appended for nonsense, it was not a bad production. The boys clustered round Brittle, looking over his shoulder, as he read the composition aloud for the benefit of those who could not elbow space to see.

'It wouldn't be bad,' said Huntley, critically, 'if it were done into good grammar.'

'Into what?' roared Brittle. 'The grammar's as good as you can produce any day, Huntley. Come!'

'I'll correct it for you,' said Huntley, coolly. 'There are a dozen faults in it.'

'The arrogance of those upper-desk fellows!' ejaculated Brittle. 'The stops are not put in yet, and they have not the gumption to allow for them. You'll see what it is when it shall be written out properly, Huntley. It might be sent to the British Museum as a marvel of good English, there to be framed and glazed. I'll do it to-night.'

'It's no business of yours, Mr. Brittle, that you should interfere to take an active part in it,' resumed Gerald Yorke

'No business of mine! That's good! When I am thinking of going in for the seniorship myself another time!'

'It's the business of the whole batch of us, if

you come to that!' roared Bywater, trying to accomplish the difficult feat of standing on his head on the open mullioned window-frame, thereby running the danger of coming to grief down amid the gravestones and grass of the College burial-yard. 'If Pye does not get called to order now, he may lapse into the habit of passing over hard-working fellows with brains, to exalt some good-for-nothing cake with none, because he happens to have a Dutchman for his mother. That *would* wash, that would!'

'You, Bywater! you! do you mean that for me?' hotly demanded Gerald Yorke.

'As if I did!' laughed Bywater. 'As if I meant it for any cake in particular! Unless the cap happens to fit 'em. *I* don't say it does.'

'The thing is this,' struck in Hurst; 'who will sign the paper? It's of no use for Brittle, or any other fellow, to be at the bother of writing it out, if nobody can be got to sign it.'

'What do you mean? The school's ready to sign it.'

'Are the seniors?'

With the seniors there was a hitch. Gaunt put himself practically out of the affair; Gerald Yorke would not sign it; and Channing could not. Huntley alone remained.

Why could not Channing sign it! Ah, there

was the lever that was swaying and agitating the whole school this afternoon. Poor Tom Channing was not just now reposing upon rose leaves. What with his fiery temper and his fiery pride, Tom had enough to do to keep himself within bounds; for the school was resenting upon him the stigma that had fallen upon Arthur. Not the whole school; but quite sufficient of it. Not that they openly attacked Tom; he could have repaid that in kind; but they were sending him to Coventry. Some said they would not sign a petition to the master headed by Tom Channing—Tom, you remember, standing on the rolls next to Gaunt; they said that if Tom Channing were to succeed as senior of the school, the school would rise up in open rebellion. That this feeling against him was very much fostered by the Yorkes, there was no doubt. Gerald was actuated by a two-fold motive, one of which was, that it enhanced his own chance of the seniorship. The other arose from resentment against Arthur Channing, for having brought disgrace upon the office, which contained his brother Roland. Tod fraternised in this matter with Gerald, albeit the same could not be said of him in general: no two brothers in the school agreed less well than did the Yorkes. Both of them fully believed Arthur to be guilty.

'As good have the thing out now, and settle it,

exclaimed Griffin, who came next to Gerald Yorke, and would be the fourth senior when Gaunt should leave. 'Are you fellows going to sign it, or not?'

'To whom do you speak?' demanded Gaunt.

'Well, I speak to all,' said Griffin, a good-humoured lad, but terribly mischievous, and, for some cause best known to himself, warmly espousing the cause of Gerald Yorke. 'Shall you sign it, Gaunt?'

'No. But I don't say that I disapprove of it, mind you,' added Gaunt. 'Were I going in for the seniorship, and one below me were suddenly hoisted above my head and made cock of the walk, I'd know the reason why. It is not talking that would satisfy me, or grumbling either; I'd act.'

'Gaunt doesn't sign it,' proceeded Griffin, telling off the names upon his fingers. That's one. Huntley, do you?'

'I don't come next to Gaunt,' was Huntley's answer. 'I'll speak in my right turn.'

Tom Channing stood near to Huntley, his trencher stuck aside on his head, his honest face glowing. One arm was full of books, the other rested on his hip: his whole attitude bespoke self-possession; his looks, defiance. Griffin went on.

'Gerald Yorke, do you sign it?'

'I'd see it further first.'

'That's two disposed of, Gaunt and Yorke,' pursued Griffin. 'Huntley, there's only you.'

Huntley gave a petulant stamp. 'I have told you I will not speak out of my turn. Yes, I will speak, though, as we want the affair set at rest,' he resumed, changing his mind abruptly. 'If Channing signs it, I will. There. Channing, will you sign it?'

'Yes, I will,' said Tom.

Then it was that the hubbub arose, the quarrelling, converting the cloisters into an arena. One word led to another. Fiery blood bubbled up; harsh things were spoken. Gerald Yorke and his party reproached Tom Channing with being a *disgrace* to the school's charter, through his brother Arthur. Huntley and a few more warmly espoused Tom's cause, of whom saucy Bywater was one, who roared out cutting sarcasms from his gymnasium on the window frame. Tom controlled himself better than might have been expected, but he and Gerald Yorke flung passionate retorts one to the other.

'It is not fair to cast in a fellow's teeth the short-comings of his relations,' continued Bywater. 'What with our uncles and cousins, and mothers and grandmothers, there's sure to be one among them that goes off the square. Look at that rich lot, next door to Lady Augusta's, with their

carriages and servants, and soirées, and all the rest of their grandeur!—their uncle was hanged for sheep-stealing.'

'I'd rather steal a sheep and be hanged for it, than I'd help myself to a nasty bit of paltry money, and then deny that I did it!' foamed Gerald. 'The suspicion might have fallen on my brother, but that he happened, by good luck, to be away that afternoon. My opinion is, that Arthur Channing intended the suspicion to fall upon him.'

A howl from Bywater. He had gone over, head foremost, to make acquaintance with the graves. They were too much engrossed to heed him.

'Your brother was a vast deal more likely to have helped himself to it, than Arthur Channing,' raged Tom. 'He does a hundred dirty things every day, that a Channing would rather cut off his arm than attempt.'

The disputants' faces were nearly touching each other, and very fiery faces they were—that is, speaking figuratively. Tom's certainly was red enough, but Gerald's was white—white with passion. Some of the bigger boys stood close to prevent blows, which Gaunt was forbidding.

'I *know* he did it!' shrieked Gerald. 'There!'

'You can't know it!' stamped Tom. 'You don't know it!'

'I *do*. And for two pins I'd tell.'

The boast was a vain boast, the heat of passion alone prompting it. Gerald Yorke was not scrupulously particular in calm moments; but little recked he what he said in violent ones. Tom repudiated it with scorn. But there was another upon whom the words fell with intense fear.

And that was Charley Channing. Misled by Gerald's positive and earnest tone, the boy really believed there must be some foundation for the assertion. A wild fear seized him, lest Gerald should proclaim some startling fact, conveying a conviction of Arthur's guilt to the minds of the school. The blood forsook his face, his lips trembled, and he pushed his way through the throng till he touched Gerald.

'Don't say it, Gerald Yorke! Don't!' he imploringly whispered. 'I have kept counsel for you.'

'What?' said Gerald, wheeling round.

'I have kept your counsel about the surplice. Keep Arthur's in return, if you do know anything against him.'

I wish you could have witnessed the change in Gerald Yorke's countenance! A streak of scarlet crossed its pallor, his eyes blazed forth defiance, and a tremor, as of fear, momentarily shook him. To the surprise of the boys, who had no notion

what might have been the purport of Charley's whisper, he seized the boy by the arm, and fiercely dragged him away up the cloisters, turning the corner into the west quadrangle.

'Get down!' he hissed; 'get down upon your knees, and swear that you'll never breathe a syllable of that calumny again! Do you hear me, boy?'

'No, I will not,' said brave Charley.

Gerard drew in his lips. 'You have heard of a wild tiger, my boy? There was one escaped from a caravan the other day, and killed a few. I am worse than a wild tiger now, and you had better not provoke me. Swear it, or I'll kill you!'

'I will not swear,' repeated the child. 'I'll try and keep the word I gave you, not to betray about the surplice—I will indeed; but don't you say again, please, that Arthur is guilty.'

To talk of killing somebody, and to set about doing it, are two things. Gerald Yorke's 'killing' would have amounted to no more than a good thrashing. He held the victim at arm's length, his eyes dilating, his right hand raised, when a head was suddenly propelled close upon them from the graveyard. Gerald was so startled as to drop his hold of Charley.

The head belonged to Stephen Bywater, who must have crept across the burial-ground and chosen

that spot to emerge in, attracted probably by the noise. 'What's the row?' asked he.

'I was about to give Miss Channing a taste of tan,' replied Gerald, who appeared to suddenly cool down from his passion. 'He'd have got it sweetly, had you not come up. I'll tan you too, Mr. Bywater, if you come thrusting yourself, like that, where you are not expected, and not wanted.'

'Tan away,' coolly responded Bywater. 'I can tan again. What had the young one been up to?'

'Impudence,' shortly answered Yorke. 'Mark you, Miss Channing! I have not done with you, though it is my pleasure to let you off for the present. Halloa! What's that?'

It was a tremendous sound of shrieking and yelling, as if some one amid the throng of boys was getting 'tanned' there. Gerald and Charley flew off towards it, followed by Bywater, who propelled himself upwards through the mullioned frame in the best manner that he could. The sufferer proved to be Tod Yorke, who was writhing under the sharp correction of some tall fellow, six feet high. To the surprise of Gerald, he recognized his brother Roland.

You may remember it was stated in the last chapter that Roland Yorke flew off, in wild indignation, from Lady Augusta's news of the parting of the Reverend Mr. Yorke and Constance

Channing. Roland, in much inward commotion, was striding through the cloisters on his way to find that reverend divine, when he strode up to the throng of disputants, who were far too much preoccupied with their own concerns to observe him. The first distinct voice that struck upon Roland's ear above the general hubbub, was that of his brother Tod.

When Gerald had rushed away with Charley Channing, it had struck Tod that he could not do better than take up the dispute on his own score. He forced himself through the crowd to where Gerald had stood in front of Tom Channing, and began. For some little time the confusion was so great he could not be heard, but Tod persevered; his manner was overbearing, his voice a loud one.

'I say that Tom Channing might have the decency to take himself out of the school. When our friends put us into it, they didn't expect we should have to consort with thieves' brothers.'

'You contemptible little reptile! how dare you presume to cast aspersion at my brother?' scornfully uttered Tom. And the scorn was all he threw at him; for the seniors disdained, whatever the provocation, to attack personally those younger and less than themselves. Tod Yorke knew this.

'How dare I! Oh!' danced Tod. 'I dare because I dare, and because it's true. When my brother Gerald says he knows it was Arthur Channing helped himself to the note, he does know it. Do you think,' he added, improving upon Gerald's suggestion, 'that my brother Roland could be in the same office, and not know that he helped himself to it? He——'

It was at this unlucky moment that Roland had come up. He heard the words, dashed the intervening boys right and left, caught hold of Mr. Tod by the collar of his jacket, and lifted him from the ground, as an angry lion might lift a contemptible little animal which had enraged him. Roland Yorke was not an inapt type of an angry lion then, with his panting breath, his blazing eye, and his working nostrils.

'Take that! and that! and that!' cried he, giving Tod a taste of his strength. '*You* speak against Arthur Channing!—take that! You false little hound!—and that! Let me catch you at it again, and I won't leave a whole bone in your body!'

Tod writhed; Tod howled; Tod shrieked; Tod roared for mercy. All in vain. Roland continued his 'and thats!' and Gerald and the other two absentees came leaping up. Roland loosed him then, and turned his flashing eyes upon Gerald.

'Is it true that you said you knew Arthur Channing took the bank-note?'

'What if I did?' retorted Gerald.

'Then you told a lie! A lie as false as you are. If you don't eat your words, you are a disgrace to the name of Yorke. Boys, believe *me!*' flashed Roland, turning to the wondering throng—'Gaunt, *you* believe me—Arthur Channing never did take the note. I know it. I know it, I tell you! I don't care who it was took it, but it was not Arthur Channing. If you listen again to his false assertions,' pointing scornfully to Gerald, 'you'll show yourselves to be sneaking curs.'

Roland stopped for want of breath. Bold Bywater, who was sure to find his tongue before anybody else, elbowed his way to the inner circle, and flourished about there, in complete disregard of the sad state of dilapidation he was in behind; a large portion of a very necessary article of attire having been, in some unaccountable manner, torn away by his recent fall.

'That's right, Roland Yorke!' cried he. 'I'd scorn the action of bringing up a fellow's relations against him. Whether Arthur Channing took the note, or whether he didn't, what has that got to do with Tom?—or with us? They are saying, some of them, that Tom Channing shan't sign a petition to the master about the seniorship!'

'What petition?' uttered Roland, who had not calmed down a whit.

'Why! about Pye giving it to Gerald Yorke, over the others' heads,' returned Bywater. '*You* know. Gerald's crowing over it, like anything, but I say it's a shame. I heard him and Griffin say this morning, that there was only Huntley to get over, now Tom Channing was put out of it through the bother about Arthur.'

'What's the dean about, that he does not give Pye a word of a sort?' asked Roland.

'The dean! If we could only get to tell the dean, it might be all right. But none of us dare.'

'Thank you for your defence of Arthur,' said Tom Channing to Roland Yorke, as the latter was striding away.

Roland looked back. 'I am ashamed for all the lot of you! you might know that Arthur Channing needs no defence. He should not be aspersed in my school, Gaunt, if I were senior.'

What with one thing and another, Roland's temper had not been so aroused for many a-day. Gaunt ran after him, but Roland would not turn his head, or speak.

'Your brothers are excited against Tom Channing, and that makes them hard upon him, with regard to this accusation of Arthur,' observed Gaunt. 'Tom has gone on above a bit, about

Gerald's getting the seniorship over him and Huntley. Tom Channing can go on at a splitting rate when he likes, and he has not spared his tongue. Gerald, being the party interested, does not like it. That's what they were having a row over, when you came up.'

'Gerald has no more right to be put over Tom Channing's head, than you have to be put over Pye's,' said Roland, angrily.

'Of course he has not,' replied Gaunt. 'But things don't go by "rights," you know. This business of Arthur Channing's has been quite a windfall for Gerald; he makes it into an additional reason why Tom, at any rate, should not have the seniorship. And there only remains Huntley.'

'He does, does he!' exclaimed Roland. 'If the dean ——'

Roland's voice—it had not been a soft one—died away. The dean himself appeared suddenly at the door of the chapter-house, which they were then passing. Roland raised his hat, and Gaunt touched his trencher. The dean accosted the latter, his tone and manner less serene than usual.

'What is the cause of this unusual noise, Gaunt? It has disturbed me in my reading. If the cloisters are to be turned into a bear-garden, I shall certainly order them to be closed to the boys.'

'I'll go and stop it at once, sir,' replied Gaunt, touching his trencher again, as he hastily retired. He had no idea that the dean was in the chapter-house.

Roland, taking no time for consideration—he very rarely did take it, or any of the Yorkes—burst forth with the grievance to the dean. Not that Roland was one who cared much about justice or injustice in the abstract; but he was feeling excessively wroth with Gerald, and in a humour to espouse Tom Channing's cause against the world.

'The college boys are in a state of semi-rebellion, Mr. Dean, and are not so quiet under it as they might be. They would like to bring their cause of complaint to you; but they don't dare.'

'Indeed?' said the dean.

'The senior boy leaves the school at Michaelmas,' went on Roland, scarcely giving the dean time to say the word. 'The one who stands first to step into his place is Tom Channing; the next is Huntley; the last is Gerald Yorke. There is a belief afloat that Mr. Pye means to pass over the two first, without reference to their merits or their rights, and to bestow it upon Gerald Yorke. The rumour is, that he has promised this to my mother, Lady Augusta. Ought this to be so, Mr. Dean?—although my asking it may seem to be

opposed to Lady Augusta's wishes and my brother's interests.'

'Where have you heard this?' inquired the dean.

'Oh, the whole town is talking of it, sir. Of course, that does not prove its truth; but the college boys believe it. They think,' said Roland, pointedly, 'that the dean ought to ascertain its grounds of foundation, and to interfere. Tom Channing is bearing the brunt of this false accusation on his brother, which some of the cowards are casting to him. It would be too bad were Pye to deprive him of the seniorship!'

'You deem the accusation on Arthur Channing to be a false one?' returned the dean.

'There never was a more false accusation brought in this world,' replied Roland, relapsing into excitement. 'I would answer for Arthur Channing with my own life. He is entirely innocent. Good afternoon, Mr. Dean. If I stop longer, I may say more than's polite; there's no telling. Things that I have heard this afternoon have put my temper up.'

He strode away towards the west door, leaving the dean looking after him with a smile. The dean had been on terms of friendship with Dr. Yorke, and was intimate with his family. Roland's words were a somewhat singular corroboration of

Arthur Channing's private defence to the dean but an hour before.

Meanwhile Gaunt had gone up to scatter the noisy crew. 'A nice row you have got me into with your quarrelling,' he exclaimed. 'The dean has been in the chapter-house all the while, and isn't he in a passion! He threatens to shut up the cloisters.'

The announcement brought stillness, chagrin. 'What a bothering old duff he is, that dean!' uttered Bywater. 'He is always turning up when he's not wanted.'

'Take your books, and disperse in silence,' was the command of the senior boy.

'Stop a bit,' said Bywater, turning himself round and about for general inspection. 'Look at me! Can I go home?'

'My!' roared the boys, who had been too preoccupied to be observant. 'Haven't they come to grief!'

'But can I go though the streets?'

'Law, yes! Make a rush for it. Folks will know you have been in the wars.'

CHAPTER X.

THE DEPARTURE.

I LIKE to see the skies fair and the sun shining, on the morning fixed for a journey. It seems to whisper a promise that satisfaction from that journey shall be in store; a foolish notion, no doubt, but a pleasant one.

Never did there arise a more lovely morning to gladden the world, than that fixed for Mr. and Mrs. Channing's departure. The August sky was without a cloud, the early dew glittered in the sun, and the bees and butterflies sported amidst the opening flowers.

Mr. Channing was up betimes, and had gathered his children around him—all. Tom and Charles had, by permission, holiday that morning from early school, and Constance had not gone to Lady Augusta Yorke's. The very excitement and bustle of preparation had appeared to have a beneficial effect upon Mr. Channing; perhaps it was the effect of the great hope which had seated itself in his heart, and was at work there. But Mr. Chan-

ning did not count upon this hope one whit more than he could help; for disappointment *might* be the ending. In this, the hour of parting from his home and his children, the hope seemed to have buried itself five fathom deep, if not to have died away completely. Who, in a similar position to Mr. Channing, has not felt this depression on quitting a beloved home?

The parting had been less sad but for the dark cloud hanging over Arthur. Mr. Channing had no resource but to believe him guilty, and his manner to him had grown cold and stern. It was a pleasing sight—could you have looked in upon it that morning—one that would put you in mind of that happier world where partings are not.

For it was to that world that Mr. Channing had been carrying the thoughts of his children in these, the last moments. The Bible was before him, but all that he had chosen to read was a short psalm. And then he prayed God to bless them; to keep them from evil; to be their all-powerful protector. There was not a dry eye present; and Charles and Annabel—Annabel with all her wildness—sobbed aloud.

He was standing up now, supported by Hamish, his left hand leaning heavily, also for support, on the shoulder of Tom. Oh! but Arthur felt it keenly! felt it as if his heart would break. It was

Tom whom his father had especially called to his aid; *he* was passed over. It was hard to bear.

He was giving a word of advice, of charge to all. 'Constance, my pretty one, the household is in your charge, you must take care of your brothers' comforts; and, Hamish, my son, I leave Constance to the care of *you*. Tom, let me enjoin you to keep your temper within bounds, particularly with regard to that unsatisfactory matter, the seniorship. Annabel, be obedient to your sister, and give her no care; and Charley, my little darling, be loving and gentle as you always are. Upon my return—if I shall be spared to return—

'Father,' exclaimed Arthur, in a wailing burst of irrepressible feeling, 'have you no word for *me?*'

Mr. Channing laid his hand upon the head of Arthur. 'Bless, oh bless this my son!' he softly murmured. 'And may God forgive him, if he be indeed the erring one we fear!'

But a few minutes had elapsed since Mr. Channing had repeated aloud the petition in the prayer taught us by our Saviour—'Lead us not into temptation!' It had come quickly to one of his hearers. If ever temptation assailed a heart it assailed Arthur's then. 'Not I, father; it is Hamish who is guilty; it is for him I have to bear. Hamish, whom you are caressing, was the true culprit; I, whom you despise, am innocent.' Words such as

these might have hovered on Arthur's lips; they were near doing it, but for the strangely imploring look cast to him from the tearful eyes of Constance, who read his struggle. Arthur remembered One who had endured temptation far greater than this; who is ever ready to grant the same strength of patience to those who need it. A few moments, and the struggle and the temptation faded away, and he had not yielded to it.

'Children, I do not like these partings. They always sadden my heart. They make me long for that life where partings shall be no more. Oh, my dear ones, do you all strive on to attain to that blessed life! Think what would be our woeful grief—if such can assail us there; if memory of the past may be allowed us—should we find any one of our dear ones absent—of you who now stand around me! I speak to you all—not more to one than to another—absent through his own fault, his own sin, his own carelessness! Oh, children! you cannot tell my love for you—my anxious care!—lest any of you should lose this inconceivable blessing. Work on; strive on; and if we never meet again here——'

'Oh, papa, papa,' wildly sobbed Annabel, 'we shall meet again! You will come back well.'

'I trust we shall! I do trust I may! God is ever merciful and good. All I would have said

was, that my life is uncertain; that, if it be His will not to spare me, I shall but have preceded you to that better land. My blessing be upon you, my children! God's blessing be upon you! Fare you well.'

In the bustle of getting Mr. Channing to the fly, Arthur was left alone with his mother. She clung to him, sobbing much. Even her faith in him was shaken. When the rupture occurred between Mr. Yorke and Constance, Arthur never spoke up to say, 'There is no cause for parting; I am not guilty.' Mrs. Channing was not the only one who had expected him to say this, or something equivalent; and she found her expectation vain. Arthur had maintained a studied silence; of course it could only tell against him.

'Mother! my darling mother! I would ask you to trust me still, but that I see how difficult it is for you!' he said, as hot tears were wrung from his aching heart.

Hamish came in. Arthur, not caring to exhibit his emotion for everybody's benefit, retired to the distant window. 'My father is in, all comfortable,' said Hamish. 'Mother, are you sure you have everything?'

'Everything, I believe.'

'Well—put this into your private purse, mother mine. You'll find a use for it.'

It was a ten-pound note. Mrs. Channing began protesting she should have enough without it.

'Mrs. Channing, I know your "enoughs,"' laughed Hamish, in his very gayest and lightest tone. 'You'll be for going without dinner every other day, fearing the funds won't last. If you don't take it, I shall send it after you to-morrow.'

'Thank you, my dear, considerate boy!' she gratefully said, as she put up the money, which would, in good truth, prove useful. 'But how have you been able to get it for me?'

'As if a man could not save up his odd sixpences for a rainy day!' quoth Hamish.

She implicitly believed him. She had entire faith in her darling Hamish; and the story of his embarrassments had not reached her ear. Arthur heard all from his distant window. 'For that very money, given to my mother as a gift from *him*, I must suffer,' was the rebellious thought that ran through his mind.

The fly started. Mr. and Mrs. Channing and Charley inside, Hamish on the box with the driver. Tom galloped to the station on foot. Of course the boys were eager to see them off. But Arthur, in his refined sensitiveness, would not put himself forward to make one; and nobody asked him to do so.

The train was on the point of starting. Mr.

and Mrs. Channing were in their places, certain arrangements having been made for the convenience of Mr. Channing, who was partially lying across from one seat to the other; Hamish and the others were standing round for a last word, when there came one, fighting his way through the platform's bustle, pushing porters, and anybody else who impeded his progress, to the right about. It was Roland Yorke.

'Haven't I come up at a splitting pace! I overslept myself, Mr. Channing, and thought I should not be in time to give you a God-speed. I hope you'll have a pleasant time, and come back cured, sir!'

'Thank you, Roland. These heartfelt wishes from you all are very welcome.'

'I say, Mr. Channing,' continued Roland, leaning over the carriage window, in utter disregard to danger, 'if you should hear of any good place abroad, that you think I might do for, I wish you'd speak a word for me.'

'Place abroad!' repeated Mr. Channing, while Hamish burst into a laugh.

'Yes,' said Roland. 'My brother George knew a fellow who went over to Austria or Prussia, or some of those places, and dropped into a very good thing there, quite by accident. It was connected with one of the embassies, I think; five or six hundred a year, and but little to do.'

Mr. Channing smiled. 'Windfalls, like that, are rare. I fear I am not likely to hear of anything of the sort. But what has Mr. Galloway done to you, Roland? You are a fixture with him.'

'I am tired of Galloway's,' frankly confessed Roland. 'I didn't enjoy myself there before Arthur left, but I am fit to hang myself since, with nobody to speak to but that calf of a Jenkins! If Galloway will take on Arthur again, and do him honour, I'll stop and make the best of it; but, if he won't——'

'Back! back! hands off there! are you mad?' And amidst much shouting, and running, and dragging back careless Roland out of danger, the train steamed out of the station.

CHAPTER XI.

ABROAD.

A POWERFUL steamer was cutting smoothly through the waters. The large expanse of sea lay around, dotted with its fishing-boats, which had come out with the night's tide; a magnificent vessel, her spars glittering in the rising sun, might be observed in the distance, and the grey, misty sky, overhead, gave promise of a hot and lovely day.

Some of the passengers lay on deck, where they had stationed themselves the previous night, preferring its open air to the closeness of the cabins, in the event of rough weather. Rough weather they need not have feared. The passage had been perfectly calm; the sea smooth as a lake; not a breath of wind had there been to help the good ship upon her course; steam had to do its full work. But for this dead calm, the fishing-craft would not be huddling in, close in-shore, looking like a shoal of sea-gulls, more than like themselves. Had a wind,

ever so gentle, sprung up, they would have put out farther, to more prolific waters.

A noise, a shout, a greeting! and some of the passengers, already awake, but lying lazily yet, sprang up to see what caused it. It was a meeting steamer, bound for home, for the great metropolis which they had quitted not seventeen hours previously. The respective captains exchanged salutes from their places aloft, and the fine boats cut past each other.

'*Bon voyage! bon voyage!*' shouted out a little French boy to the retreating steamer.

'We have had a fine passage, captain,' observed a gentleman, who was stretching himself and stamping about the deck, after his night's repose on the hard bench.

'Middling,' responded the captain, to whom a dead calm was not quite so agreeable as it was to his passengers. 'Should ha' been in all the sooner for a breeze.'

'How long shall we be, now?'

'A good time yet. Can't go along as if the wind was at our backs.'

The steamer made good progress, however, in spite of not being helped by the faithless wind. It glided up the Scheldt, and, by-and-by, the beautiful spire of Antwerp Cathedral was discerned, rising against the clear sky. Mrs. Channing, who

had been one of those early astir, went back to her husband. He was lying where he had been placed when the vessel left St. Katherine's Docks.

'We shall soon be in, James. I wish you could see that noble spire. I have been searching for it ever so long; it is in sight, now. Hamish told me to keep a look-out for it.'

'Did he?' replied Mr. Channing. 'How did Hamish know it might be seen?'

'From the guide-books, I suppose, or by hearsay, possibly. Hamish seems to know everything. What a favourable passage we have had!'

'Ay,' said Mr. Channing. 'What I should have done in a rough passage, I cannot tell. The dread of it has been pressing on me like a nightmare since our voyage was fixed.'

Mrs. Channing smiled. 'Troubles seldom come from the quarter we anticipate them.'

Later, when Mrs. Channing was once more leaning over the side of the vessel, a man came up and put a card in her hand, jabbering away in German to her at the same time. The Custom House officers had come on board then.

'Oh, dear, if Constance were but here! it is for the speaking that we shall miss her,' thought Mrs. Channing. 'I am sorry that I do not understand you,' she said, turning to the man.

'Madame want an hot-el? That hot-el a good

one,' tapping the card with his finger, and dextrously turning the reverse side upward, where was set forth in English the desirableness of a certain Antwerpian hotel.

'Thank you, but we make no stay at Antwerp; we go straight on at once.' And she would have handed back the card.

No, he would not receive it. 'Madame might be wanting an hot-el at another time; on her return, it might be. If so, would she patronise it? it was a good hot-el; perfect!'

Mrs. Channing slipped the card into her reticule, and searched in her private directions to see what hotel Hamish had marked down, should they require one at Antwerp. She found it to be the Hotel de Parc; not the one recommended on the man's card. Hamish certainly had contrived to acquire for them a vast fund of information; and, as it turned out, information to be relied on.

Breakfast was to be obtained on board the steamer, and they availed themselves of it, as did a few of the other passengers. Some delay occurred in the bringing the steamer to the side, after they arrived; whether from that cause, or the captain's grievance—want of wind—or from both, they were in later than they ought to have been. When the first passenger put his foot on land, they had been out twenty hours.

Mr. Channing was the last to be removed, as, with him, there was aid required. Mrs. Channing stood on shore, at the head of the ladder, looking down anxiously, lest in any way hurt should come to him, when she found a hand laid upon her shoulder, and a familiar voice saluted her.

'Mrs. Channing! Who would have thought of seeing you here! Have you dropped from the moon?'

Not only was the voice familiar, but the face also. In the surprise of being so addressed, in the confusion around her, Mrs. Channing positively did not for a moment recognise it; all she saw was, that it was a *home* face. 'Mr. Huntley!' she exclaimed, when she gathered her senses; and, in the rush of pleasure of meeting him, of not feeling utterly alone in that strange land, she put both her hands into his. 'I may return your question by asking where you have dropped from. I thought you were in the south of France.'

'So I was,' he answered, 'until a few days ago, when business brought me to Antwerp. A gentleman is living here whom I wished to see. Take care, my men!' he continued to the English sailors who were carrying up Mr. Channing. 'Mind your footing.' But the ascent was accomplished in safety, and Mr. Channing placed in a carriage.

'Do you understand their lingo?' Mr. Huntley asked, as the landing waiters talked and chattered around.

'Not a syllable,' she answered. 'I can manage a little French, but this is as a sealed book to me. Is it German or Flemish?'

'Flemish, I conclude,' he said, laughingly; 'but my ears will not tell me, any more than yours. I should have done well to bring Ellen with me. She said to me, in her saucy way, "Papa, when you get among the French and Germans, you will be wishing for me to interpret for you."'

'As I have been wishing for Constance,' replied Mrs. Channing. 'In our young days, it was no more thought essential to learn German than it was to learn Hindustanee. French was only partially taught.'

'Quite true,' said Mr. Huntley. 'I managed to rub through France after a fashion, but I don't know what the natives thought of my French: what I did know, I have half forgotten. But, now for explanations. Of course, Mr. Channing is come to try the effect of the German springs?'

'Yes, and we have such hopes!' she answered. 'There does appear to be a probability that not only relief, but a cure, may be effected; otherwise, you may be sure we should not have ventured on the expense.'

'I always said Mr. Channing ought to try them.'

'Very true; you did so. We were only waiting, you know, for the termination of the chancery suit. It is terminated, Mr. Huntley; and against us.'

Mr. Huntley had been abroad since June, travelling in different parts of the Continent; but he had heard from home regularly, chiefly from his daughter, and this loss of the suit was duly communicated with other news.

'Never mind,' said he to Mrs. Channing. 'Better luck next time.'

He was of a remarkably gay, pleasant disposition, in temperament not unlike Hamish Channing. A man of keen intellect was Mr. Huntley; his fine face expressed it. The luggage collected, they rejoined Mr. Channing.

'I have scarcely said a word to you,' Mr. Huntley cried, taking his hand. 'But I am better pleased to see you here, than I should be anybody else living. It is the first step towards a cure. Where are you bound for?'

'For Borcette. It is ——'

'I know it,' interrupted Mr. Huntley. 'I was at it a year or two ago. One of the little Brunnens, near Aix-la-Chapelle. I stayed a whole week there. I have a great mind to proceed thither with you, now, and settle you there.'

'Oh, do!' exclaimed Mr. Channing, his face

lighting up, as the faces of invalids will light up at the anticipated companionship of a friend. 'If you can spare the time, do come with us!'

'My time is my own; the business that brought me here is concluded, and I was thinking of leaving to-day. Having nothing to do after my early breakfast, I strolled down to watch in the London steamer, little thinking I should see you arrive by it. That's settled, then; I will accompany you as far as Borcette, and see you installed.'

'When do you return home?'

'Now; and glad enough I shall be to get there. Travelling is delightful for a change, but when you have had sufficient of it, home peeps out in the vista, with all its charms.'

The train which Mr. and Mrs. Channing had intended to take was already gone, through the delay in the steamer reaching Antwerp, and they had to wait for another. When it started, it had them safely in it, and Mr. Huntley with them. Their route lay through part of the Netherlands, through Malines, through some beautiful valleys; so beautiful that it is worth going the whole distance from England to see.

'What is this disturbance about the seniorship, and Lady Augusta Yorke?' Mr. Huntley asked, as it suddenly occurred to his recollection, in the earlier part of their journey. 'Master Harry has

written me a letter full of notes of exclamation and indignation, saying I "ought to come home and see about it." What is it?'

Mr. Channing explained; at least, as much as he knew of it to explain. 'It has given rise to a good deal of dissatisfaction in the school,' he added, 'but I cannot think, for my own part, that it can have any foundation. Mr. Pye would not be likely to give a promise of the kind, either to Lady Augusta, or to any other of the boys' friends.'

'If he attempted to give one to me, I should throw it back to him with a word of a sort,' hastily rejoined Mr. Huntley, in a warm tone. 'Nothing can possibly be more unjust, than to elevate one boy over another's head undeservedly; nothing, in my opinion, can be more pernicious. It is enough to render the boy himself unjust through his life; to give him loose ideas of right and wrong. Have you not inquired into it?'

'No,' replied Mr. Channing.

'I shall. If I find reason to suspect there may be cause, I shall certainly inquire into it. Underhand work of that sort goes, with me, against the grain. I can stir in it with a better grace than you can,' Mr. Huntley added: 'my son being pretty sure not to succeed to the seniorship, so long as yours is above him to take it. Tom Chan-

ning will make a good senior; better than Harry would. Harry, in his easy indifference, would suffer the school to lapse into insubordination; Tom will keep a tight hand over it.'

A sensation of pain darted across the heart of Mr. Channing. Only the day previous to his quitting home, he had accidentally heard a few words spoken between Tom and Charley, which had told him that Tom's chance of the seniorship was perilled, through the business connected with Arthur. Mr. Channing had then questioned Tom, and found that it was so. He must speak of this now to Mr. Huntley, however painful it might be to himself to do so. It were more manly to meet it openly than to bury it in silence, and let Mr. Huntley hear of it (if he had not yet heard of it) as soon as he got to Helstonleigh.

'Have you heard anything particular about Arthur lately?' inquired Mr. Channing.

'Of course I have,' was the answer. 'Ellen did not fail to give me a full account. I congratulate you on possessing such sons.'

'Congratulate! To what do you allude?' asked Mr. Channing.

'To Arthur's seeking after Jupp's place, as soon as he knew that the suit had failed. He's a true Channing. I am glad he got it.'

'Not to that—I did not allude to that,' hastily

rejoined Mr. Channing. And then, with downcast eyes, and a downcast heart, he related sufficient to put Mr. Huntley in possession of the facts.

Mr. Huntley heard the tale with incredulity, a smile of ridicule parting his lips. 'Suspect Arthur of theft!' he exclaimed. 'What next? Had I been in my place on the magistrates' bench that day, I should have dismissed the charge at once, upon such defective evidence. Channing, what is the matter?'

Mr. Channing laid his hand upon his aching brow, and Mr. Huntley had to bend over him to catch the whispered answer. 'I do fear that he may be guilty. If he is not guilty, some strange mystery altogether is attached to it.'

'But why do you fear that he is guilty?' asked Mr. Huntley, in surprise.

'Because his own conduct, relative to the charge, is so strange. He will not assert his innocence; or, if he does attempt to assert it, it is done with a faint, hesitating manner and tone, that can only impart the impression of falsehood, instead of truth.'

'It is utterly absurd to suppose your son Arthur capable of the like guilt. He is one of those whom it is impossible to doubt; noble, true, honourable! No; I would suspect myself, before I could suspect Arthur Channing.'

'I would have suspected myself before I had suspected him,' impulsively spoke Mr. Channing. 'But there are the facts, coupled with his non-denial. He could not deny it, even to the satisfaction of Mr. Galloway; did not attempt it; had he done so, Galloway would not have turned him from the office.'

Mr. Huntley fell into thought, revolving over the details, as they had been related to him. That Arthur was the culprit, his judgment entirely repudiated; and he came to the conclusion that he must be screening another. He glanced at Mrs. Channing, who sat in troubled silence.

'You do not believe Arthur guilty?' he said, in a low tone, suddenly bending over to her.

'I do not know what to believe; I am racked with doubt and pain,' she answered. 'Arthur's private words to me are only compatible with entire innocence; but then, what becomes of the broad facts?—of his strange appearance of guilt before the world? God can bring his innocence to light, he says; and he is content to wait His time.'

'If there is a mystery, I'll try and come to the bottom of it, when I reach Helstonleigh,' thought Mr. Huntley. 'Arthur's not guilty, whoever else may be.'

It was impossible to shake his firm faith in

Arthur Channing. Mr. Huntley was one of those few who read character strongly and surely, and he *knew* Arthur was incapable of doing wrong. Had his eyes witnessed Arthur positively steal the bank-note, his mind, his judgment would have refused credence to his eyes. You may, therefore, judge that neither then, nor afterwards, was he likely to admit the possibility of Arthur's own guilt.

'And the college school is saying Tom shall not stand for the seniorship!' he resumed aloud. 'Does my son say it?'

'Some of them are saying it; I believe the majority of the school. I do not know whether your son is amongst the number.'

'He had better not let me find him to be so,' cried Mr. Huntley. 'But now, don't you suffer this affair to worry you,' he added, turning heartily to Mr. Channing. 'If Arthur's guilty, I'll eat him; and I shall make it my business to look into it closely when I reach home. You are incapacitated, my old friend, and I shall act for you.'

'Did Ellen not mention this, in writing to you?'

'No; the sly puss! Catch Miss Ellen writing to me anything that might tell against the Channings.'

A silence followed. The subject, which the words seemed to hint at, was one upon which

there could be no openness between them. A warm attachment had sprung up between Hamish Channing and Ellen Huntley; but whether Mr. Huntley would sanction it, now that the suit had failed, was doubtful. He had never explicitly sanctioned it previously: tacitly, in so far as that he had not interfered to prevent Ellen meeting Hamish in society—in friendly intercourse. Probably, he had never looked upon it in a serious point of view; possibly, he had never noticed it. Hamish had not spoken, even to Ellen; but, that they did care for each other very much, was evident to those who chose to open their eyes.

'No two people in all Helstonleigh were so happy in their children as you!' exclaimed Mr. Huntley. 'Or had such cause to be.'

'None happier,' assented Mrs. Channing, the tears rising to her eyes. 'They were, and are, so good, so dutiful, so loving. Would you believe that Hamish, little as he can have to spare, has been one of the chief contributors to help us here?'

Mr. Huntley lifted his eyebrows with a surprised gesture. 'Hamish has! How did he accomplish it?'

'He has, indeed. I fancy he has been saving up with this view. Dear, self-denying Hamish!'

Now, it just happened that Mr. Huntley was cognisant of Mr. Hamish's embarrassments; so

how the 'saving up' could have been effected, he was at a loss to know. 'Careless Hamish may have borrowed it,' thought he to himself, 'but saved it up he has not.'

'What are we approaching now?' interrupted Mr. Channing.

They were approaching the Prussian frontier; and there they had to change trains: more embarrassment for Mr. Channing. After that, they went on without interruption, and arrived safely at the terminus, almost close to Borcette, having been about four hours on the road.

'Borcette at last!' cheerily exclaimed Mr. Huntley, as he shook Mr. Channing's hand. 'Please God, it may prove to you a place of healing!'

'Amen!' was the softly murmured answer.

* * * * *

Mrs. Channing was delighted with Borcette. Poor Mr. Channing could as yet see but little of it. It was an unpretending, small place, scarcely ten minutes' distance from Aix-la-Chapelle, to which she could walk through an avenue of trees. She had never before seen a bubbling fountain of boiling water, and regarded those of Borcette with much interest. The hottest, close to the Hotel Rosenbad, where they sojourned, boasted a temperature of more than 150° Fahrenheit; it was curious to see it rising in the very middle of the

street. Other things amused her, too; in fact, all she saw was strange, and bore its peculiar interest. She watched the factory people flocking to and fro at stated hours in the day—for Borcette has its factories for woollen fabrics and looking-glasses—some thousands of souls, their promenade as regular and steady as that of school girls on their daily march under the governess's eye. The men wore blue blouses; the women, neat and clean, wore neither bonnets nor caps; but their hair was twisted smoothly round their heads, artistically, as if done by a hairdresser. Not one, women or girls, but wore enormous gold earrings, and the girls plaited their hair, and let it hang behind. What a contrast they presented to their class in England! Mrs. Channing had, not long before, spent a few weeks in one of our large factory towns in the north. She remembered still the miserable, unwholesome, dirty, poverty-stricken appearance of the factory workers there—their almost *disgraceful* appearance; she remembered still the boisterous or the slouching manner with which they proceeded to their work; their language anything but choice. But these Prussians looked a respectable, well-conducted, well-to-do body of people; their clothes were good; their manners and conduct admirable. Where could the great difference lie? Not in wages; for the

English were better paid than the Germans. We should go abroad to learn economy, and many other desirable accompaniments of daily life. Nothing amused her more than to see the laundresses, and house-wives generally, washing the linen at these boiling springs; wash, wash, wash! chatter, chatter, chatter! She thought they must have no water in their own homes, for they would flock in numbers to the springs with their kettles and jugs to fill them.

It was Doctor Lamb who had recommended them to the Hotel Rosenbad; and they found the recommendation a good one. Removed from the narrow, dirty, offensive streets of the little town, it was desirably situated. The promenade, with its broad walks, its smart company (many of them invalids nearly as helpless as Mr. Channing), and its oft-playing musical bands, was right in front of the hotel windows; a pleasant sight for Mr. Channing until he could get about there himself. On the heights behind the hotel two churches were situated; and the sound of their musical services would be wafted down in the softest and sweetest strains of melody. In the neighbourhood there was a shrine, to which pilgrims flocked. Mrs. Channing regarded them with interest, some with their alpenstocks, some in fantastic dresses, some with strings and strings of

beads, which they knelt and told; and her thoughts went back to the old times of the Crusaders. All she saw pleased her; but for the anxiety as to what would be the effect of the new treatment upon her husband, and the ever-lively trouble regarding Arthur, it would have been a time of real delight to Mrs. Channing.

They could not have been better off than in the Hotel Rosenbad. Their rooms were on the second floor — a small, exquisitely pretty sitting-room, bearing a great resemblance to most continental sitting-rooms, its carpet red, its muslin curtains snowy white; from this opened a bed-room, containing two beds, all as convenient as it could be. Their meals, three per day, were excellent; the dinner-table in particular being abundantly supplied. For all this they paid five francs per day each, and the additional accommodation of having the repasts served in their room, on account of Mr. Channing, was not regarded as an extra expense. Their wax-lights were charged extra, and that was all. I wish English hotel-keepers would take a lesson from Borcette!

The doctor gave great hopes of Mr. Channing. Of course his expense, with the cost of the baths, was additional; the laundress was, also. The doctor's opinion was, that, had Mr. Channing come to these baths when he was first taken ill, his con-

finement would have been but trifling. 'You will find the greatest benefit in a month,' said the doctor, in answer to the anxious question, How long the restoration might be coming? 'In two months you will walk charmingly; in three, you will be well. Cheering news, if it could only be borne out.'

'I will not have you say, "If," cried Mr. Huntley, who had made one in the consultation with the doctor. 'You are told that it will be so, under God's blessing, and all you have to do is to anticipate it.'

Mr. Channing smiled. They were stationed round the open window of the sitting-room, he on the most comfortable of sofas, Mrs. Channing watching the gay prospect below, and thinking she should never be tired of looking at it. 'There can be no hope without fear,' said he.

'But I'd not think of the fear; I'd bury that altogether,' said Mr. Huntley. 'You have nothing to do here but to apply the remedies, look forward with confidence, and be as happy as the day's long.'

'I will if I can,' said Mr. Channing, with some approach to gaiety. 'I should not have gone to the expense of coming here, but that I had great hopes of the result.'

'Expense, you call it! I call it a marvel of cheapness.'

'For your pocket; cheap as it is, it will tell upon mine; but, if it does effect my restoration, I shall soon repay it tenfold.'

'"If" again! It will effect it, I say. What shall you do with Hamish, when you can resume your place at the head of your office?'

'Let me resume it first, Huntley.'

'There you go! Now, if you were only as sanguine and sure as you ought to be, I could recommend Hamish to something good to-morrow.'

'Indeed! What is it?'

'But, if you persist in saying you shall not get well, or that there's a doubt whether you will get well, where's the use of my doing it? So long as you are incapacitated, Hamish must be a fixture in Guild-street.'

'True.'

'So I shall say no more about it at present. But remember, my old friend, that when you shall be upon your legs, and have no further need of Hamish—who, I expect, will not care to drop down to a clerk again, where he has been master—I may be able to help him to something: so do not let anticipations on his score worry you. I suppose you will be losing Constance, soon?'

Mr. Channing gave vent to a groan: a sharp attack of his malady pierced his frame just then. Certain reminiscences, caused by the question, may

have helped its poignancy ; but of that Mr. Huntley had no suspicion.

In the evening, when Mrs. Channing was sitting under the acacia trees, Mr. Huntley joined her, and she took the opportunity of alluding to the subject. 'Do not mention it again in the presence of my husband,' she said: 'talking of it can only bring it before his mind with more vivid force. Constance and Mr. Yorke have parted.'

Had Mrs. Channing told him the cathedral had parted, Mr. Huntley could not have felt more surprise. 'Parted!' he ejaculated. 'From what cause?'

'It occurred through this dreadful affair of Arthur's. I fancy the fault was as much Constance's as Mr. Yorke's, but I do not know the exact particulars. He did not like it; he thought, I believe, that the marrying a sister of Arthur's would tinge his honour—or she thought it. Anyway, they parted.'

'Had William Yorke been engaged to my daughter, and given her up upon so shallow a plea, I should have been disposed to chastise him,' intemperately spoke Mr. Huntley, carried away by his strong feeling.

'But, I say I fancy the giving up was on Constance's side,' repeated Mrs. Channing. 'She has a keen sense of honour, and she knows the pride of the Yorkes.'

'Pride, such as that, would be the better for being taken down a notch,' returned Mr. Huntley. 'I am sorry for this. The accusation has indeed been productive of serious effects. Why did not Arthur go to William Yorke and avow his innocence, and tell him there was no cause for their parting? Did he not do so?'

Mrs. Channing shook her head only, by way of answer; and, as Mr. Huntley scrutinised her pale, sad countenance, he began to think there must be greater mystery about the affair than he had supposed. He said no more.

On the third day he quitted Borcette, having seen them, as he expressed it, fully installed, and pursued his route homewards, by way of Lille, Calais, and Dover. Mr. Huntley was no friend to long sea passages: people with plenty of money in their pockets rarely are.

CHAPTER XII.

AN OMINOUS COUGH.

'I SAY, Jenkins, how you cough!'

'Yes, sir, I do. It's a sign that the autumn weather's coming on. I have been pretty free from it all the summer. I think the few days I lay in bed, through that fall, must have been beneficial to my chest; for, since then, I have hardly coughed at all. This last day or two it has been bad again.'

'What cough d'ye call it?' went on Roland Yorke—you may have guessed he was the speaker. 'A churchyard cough?'

'Well, I don't know, sir,' said Jenkins. 'It *has* been called that, before now. I daresay it will be the end of me at last.'

'Cool!' ejaculated Roland. 'Cooler than I should be, if I had a cough, or any plague of the sort, that was likely to be *my* end. Does it trouble your mind, Jenkins?'

'No, sir, not exactly. It gives me rather down-

hearted thoughts now and then, till I remember that everything is sure to be ordered for the best.'

'The best! Should you call it for "the best" if you were to go off?' demanded Roland, drawing pen-and-ink chimneys, with clouds of smoke coming out, upon his blotting-paper, as he sat lazily at his desk.

'I dare say, sir, if that were to happen, I should be enabled to see that it was for the best. There's no doubt of it.'

'According to that theory, everything that happens must be for the best. You may as well say that pitching on to your head and half killing yourself, was for the best! Moonshine, Jenkins!'

'I think even that accident was sent for some wise purpose, sir. I know, in some respects, it was very palpably for the best. It afforded me some days of quiet, of serious reflection, and it served to show how considerate everybody was for me.'

'And the pain?'

'That was soon over, sir. It made me think of that better place where there will be no pain. If I am to be called there early, Mr. Roland, it is well that my thoughts should be led to it.'

Roland stared with all his eyes. 'I say, Jenkins, what do you mean? You have got nothing serious the matter with you?'

'No, sir; nothing but the cough, and a weakness that I feel. My mother and my brother both died of the same thing, sir.'

'Oh, nonsense!' returned Roland. 'Because one's mother dies, is that any reason why we should fall into low spirits and take up the notion that we are going to die, and look out for it? I am surprised at you, Jenkins.'

'I am not in low spirits, sir; and I am sure I don't look out for it. I might have looked out for it any autumn or any spring of late, had I been that way inclined, for I have had the cough at those periods, as you know, sir. There's a difference, Mr. Roland, between looking out for a thing, and not shutting one's eyes to what may come.'

'I say, old fellow, you just put all such notions away from you'—and Roland really meant to speak in a kindly spirit of cheering. 'My father died of dropsy; and I may just as well set on, and poke and pat at myself every other morning, to see if it's not attacking me. Only think what would become of this office, without you! Galloway would fret and fume himself into his tomb at only having me in it.'

A smile crossed Jenkins' face at the idea of the office confided to the management of Roland Yorke. Poor Jenkins was one of the doubtful

ones, in a sanitary point of view. Always shadowy, as if a wind would blow him away, and for some years suffering much from a cough, which only disappeared in summer, he could not, and did not, count upon a long life. He had entirely recovered from his accident, but the cough had now come on with much force, and he was feeling unusually weak.

'You don't look ill, Jenkins.'

'Don't I, sir? The Reverend Mr. Yorke met me, to-day ——'

'Don't bring up his name before me!' interrupted Roland, raising his voice to anger. 'I may begin to swear, perhaps, if you do.'

'Why, what has he done?' wondered Jenkins.

'Never mind what he has done,' nodded Roland. 'He is a disgrace to the name of Yorke. I enjoyed the pleasure of telling him so, the other night more than I have enjoyed anything a long while. He was so mad! If he had not been a parson, I shouldn't wonder but he'd have pitched into me.'

'Mr. Roland, sir, you know the parties are waiting for that lease,' Jenkins ventured to remind him.

'Let the parties wait,' rejoined Roland. 'Do they think this office is going to be hurried, as if it were a common lawyer's? I say, Jenkins,

where has old Galloway taken flight to, this afternoon?'

'He has an appointment with the surrogate,' answered Jenkins. 'Oh!—I quite forgot to mention something to you, Mr. Roland.'

'Mention it now,' said Roland.

'A person came this morning, sir, and was rather loud,' said Jenkins, in a tone of deprecation, as if he would apologise for having to repeat the news. 'He thought you were in, Mr. Roland, and that I was only denying you, and he grew insolent. Mr. Galloway happened to be in his room, unfortunately, and heard it, and he came out himself, and sent the person away. Mr. Galloway was very angry, and he desired me to tell you, sir, that he would not have that sort of people coming here.'

Roland took up the ruler, and essayed to balance it on the edge of his nose. 'Who was it?' asked he.

'I am not sure who it was, though I know I have seen the man, somewhere. I think he wanted payment of a bill, sir.'

'Nothing more likely,' rejoined Roland, with characteristic indifference. 'I hope his head won't ache till he gets it! I am cleared out for some time to come. I'd like to know who the fellow was, though, Jenkins, that I might punish

him for his impudence. How dared he come here?'

'I asked him to leave his name, sir, and he said Mr. Roland Yorke knew his name quite well enough, without having it left for him.'

'As brassy as that, was he! I wish to goodness it was the fashion to have a cistern in your house-roofs!' emphatically added Roland.

'A what, sir?' cried Jenkins, lifting his eyes from his writing.

'A water-cistern, with a movable tap, worked by a string, at pleasure. You could give it a pull, you know, when such customers as those came, and they'd find themselves under a deluge. That would cool their insolence, if anything would. I'd get up a company for it, and take out a patent, if I only had the ready money.'

Jenkins made no reply. He was applying himself diligently to his work, perhaps hoping that Mr. Roland Yorke might take the hint, and do the same. Roland actually did take it; at any rate, he dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote, at the very least, five or six words; then he looked up.

'Jenkins,' began he again, 'do you know much about Port Natal?'

'I don't know anything about it, sir; except that there is such a place.'

'Why, you know nothing!' cried Roland. 'I never saw such a muff. I wonder what you reckon yourself good for, Jenkins?'

Jenkins shook his head. No matter what reproach was brought against him, he received it meekly, as if it were his due. 'I am not good for much, sir, beyond just my daily duty here. To know about Port Natal and those foreign places is not in my work, sir, and so I'm afraid I neglect them. Did you want any information about Port Natal, Mr. Roland?'

'I have got it,' said Roland; 'loads of it. I am not sure that I shan't make a start for it, Jenkins.'

'For Port Natal, sir? Why! it's all the way to Africa!'

'Do you suppose I thought it was in Wales?' retorted Roland. 'It's the jolliest opening for an enterprising man, is Port Natal. You may land there to-day with half-a-crown in your pocket, and come away in a year or two with your fortune made.'

'Indeed!' ejaculated Jenkins. 'How is it made, sir?'

'Oh, you learn all that when you get there. I shall *go*, Jenkins, if things don't look up a bit here.'

'What things, sir?' Jenkins ventured to ask.

'Tin, for one thing; work for another,' answered Roland. 'If I don't get more of the one, and less of the other, I shall try Port Natal. I had a row with my lady at dinner time. She thinks a paltry sovereign or two ought to last a fellow for a month. My service to her! I just dropped a hint of Port Natal, and left her weeping. She'll have come to, by this evening, and behave liberally.'

'But about the work, sir?' said Jenkins. 'I'm sure I make it as light for you as I possibly can. You have only had that lease, sir, all yesterday and to-day.'

'Oh, it's not just the *amount* of work, Jenkins,' acknowledged Roland; 'it's the being tied by the leg to this horrid old office. As good work as play, if one has to be in it. I have been fit to cut it altogether every hour, since Arthur Channing left: for you know you are no company, Jenkins.'

'Very true, sir.'

'If I could only get Arthur Channing to go with me, I'd be off to-morrow! But he laughs at it. He hasn't got half pluck. Only fancy, Jenkins! my coming back in a year or two with twenty thousand pounds in my pocket! Wouldn't I give you a treat, old chap! I'd pay a couple of clerks to do your work here, and carry you off somewhere, in spite of old Galloway, for a six-

months' holiday, where you'd get rid of that precious cough. I *would*, Jenkins.'

'You are very kind, sir——'

Jenkins was stopped by the 'precious cough.' It seemed completely to rack his frame. Roland looked at him with sympathy, and just then steps were heard to enter the passage, and a knock came to the office door.

'Who's come bothering now?' cried Roland. 'Come in!'

Possibly the mandate was not heard, for poor Jenkins was coughing still. 'Don't I tell you to come in?' roared out Roland. 'Are you deaf?'

'Open the door. I don't care to soil my gloves,' came back the answer from the other side. And Mr. Roland slid off his stool to obey, rather less lazily than usual, for the voice was that of his mother, the Lady Augusta Yorke.

'A very dutiful son you are, Mr. Roland!' was the salutation of Lady Augusta. 'Forcing me up from my dinner before I had finished it!'

'I didn't do anything of the sort,' said Roland.

'Yes, you did. With your threats about Port Natal! What do you know about Port Natal? Why should you go to Port Natal? You will break my heart with grief, that's what you will do.'

'I was not going to start this afternoon,' re-

turned Roland. 'But the fact is, mother, I shall have to go to Port Natal, or to some other port, unless I can get a little money to go on with here. A fellow can't walk about with empty pockets.'

'You undutiful, extravagant boy!' exclaimed Lady Augusta. 'I am worried out of my life for money, between you all. Gerald got two sovereigns from me yesterday. What money do you want?'

'As much as you can let me have,' replied Mr. Roland.

Lady Augusta threw a five-pound note by his side upon the desk. 'When you boys have driven me into the workhouse, you'll be satisfied, perhaps. And now hold your foolish tongue about Port Natal.'

Roland gathered it up with alacrity and a word of thanks. Lady Augusta had turned to Jenkins.

'You are the best off, Jenkins; you have no children to disturb your peace. You don't look well, Jenkins.'

'Thank you kindly, my lady, I do feel but poorly. My cough has become so troublesome again.'

'He has just been saying that he thought the cough was going to take him off,' interposed Roland.

Lady Augusta laughed; she supposed it was spoken in jest; and desired her son to open

the door for her. Her gloves were new and delicate.

'Had you chosen to remain at the dinner table, as a gentleman ought, I should have told you some news, Mr. Roland,' said Lady Augusta.

Roland was always ready for news. He opened his eyes and ears. 'Tell it me now, good mother. Don't bear malice.'

'Your uncle Carrick is coming here on a visit.'

'I am glad of that; that's good!' cried Roland. 'When does he come? I say, mother, don't be in a hurry! When does he come?'

But Lady Augusta apparently was in a hurry, for she did not wait to answer. Roland looked after her, and saw her shaking hands with a gentleman, who was about to enter.

'Oh, he's back, is he!' cried unceremonious Roland. 'I thought he was dead and buried, and gone to heaven.'

CHAPTER XIII.

NO SENIORSHIP FOR TOM CHANNING.

SHAKING hands with Lady Augusta Yorke as she turned out of Mr. Galloway's office, was Mr. Huntley. He had but just arrived at Helstonleigh; had not yet been home; but he explained that he wished to give at once a word of pleasant news to Constance Channing of her father and mother, and on his way to the Boundaries, was calling in on Mr. Galloway.

'You will find Miss Channing at my house,' said Lady Augusta, after some warm inquiries touching Mr. and Mrs. Channing. 'I would offer to go back there with you, but I am on my way to make some calls.' She turned towards the town as she spoke, and Mr. Huntley entered the office.

'I thought you were never coming home again!' cried free Roland. 'Why, you have been away three months, Mr. Huntley!'

'Very nearly. Where is Mr. Galloway?'

'In his skin,' said Roland.

Jenkins looked up deprecatingly, as if he would apologise for the rudeness of Roland Yorke. 'Mr. Galloway is out, sir. I dare say he will not be away more than half an hour.'

'I can't wait now,' said Mr. Huntley. 'So you are one less in this office than you were when I left?'

'The awfullest shame!' struck in Roland. 'Have you heard that Galloway lost a bank-note out of a letter, sir?'

'Yes. I have heard of it from Mr. Channing.'

'And they accused Arthur Channing of taking it!' exclaimed Roland, emotion and anger bringing a streak of scarlet to his face. 'They took him up for it; he was had up twice to the Town-hall, like any felon. You may be slow to believe it, Mr. Huntley, but it's true.'

'It was Butterby, sir,' interposed Jenkins. 'He was rather too officious over it, and acted without the orders of Mr. Galloway.'

'Don't talk rubbish, Jenkins,' rebuked Roland. 'You have defended Galloway all through the piece, but he is as much to blame as Butterby. Why did he turn off Channing?'

'You do not deem him guilty, Roland, I see,' said Mr. Huntley.

'I should hope I don't,' answered Roland. 'Butterby pitched upon Arthur, because there

happened to be nobody else convenient to pitch upon; just as he'd have pitched upon you, Mr. Huntley, had you happened to be in the office that afternoon.'

'Mr. Arthur Channing was not guilty, I am sure, sir; pray do not think him so,' resumed Jenkins, his eye lighting as he turned to Mr. Huntley. And Mr. Huntley smiled in response to the earnestness. *He* believe Arthur Channing guilty!

He left a message for Mr. Galloway, and quitted the office. Roland, who was very difficult to settle to work again, if once disturbed from it, strided himself across his stool, and tilted it backwards.

'I'm uncommonly glad Carrick's coming!' cried he. 'Do you remember him, Jenkins?'

'Who, sir?'

'That uncle of mine. He was at Helstonleigh three years ago.'

'I am not sure that I do, sir.'

'What a sieve of a memory you must have! He is as tall as a house. We are not bad fellows for height, but Carrick beats us. He is not married, you know, and we look to him to square up many a corner. To do him justice, he never says No, when he has got the cash, but he's often out at elbows himself. It was he who bought George his commission and fitted him out; and I know my lady looks to him to find the funds Gerald will

want to make him a parson. I wonder what he'll do for me?'

Jenkins was about to answer, but was stopped by his cough. For some minutes it completely exhausted him; and Roland, in the lack of a hearer, was fain to bring the legs of his stool down again, and apply himself lazily to his work.

At this very moment, which was not much past two o'clock in the day, Bywater had got Charley Channing pinned against the palings underneath the elm trees. He had him all to himself. No other boys were within hearing; though many were within sight; for they were assembling in and round the cloisters after their dinner.

'Now, Miss Charley, it's the last time I'll ask you, as true as that we are living here! You are as obstinate as a young mule. I'll give you this one chance, and I'll not give you another. I'd advise you to lay hold upon it, if you have any regard for your skin.'

'I don't know anything, Bywater.'

'You shuffling little turncoat! I don't *know* that there's any fire in that kitchen chimney of the old dean's, but I am morally certain that there is, because of the clouds of black smoke that are coming out of it. And you know just as well who it was played the trick to my surplice. I don't want you to blurt it out to the school, and I won't

bring your name up in it at all; I won't act upon what you tell me. There!'

'Bywater, I don't know; and suspicion goes for nothing. Gaunt said it did not.'

Bywater gave Charley a petulant shake. 'I say that you know morally, Miss Channing. I protest that I heard you mention the word 'surplice' to Gerald Yorke, the day there was that row in the cloisters, when Roland Yorke gave Tod a thrashing and I took the seat out of my pants. Gerald Yorke looked ready to kill you for it, too! Come, out with it. This is about the sixth time I have had you in trap, and you have only defied me.'

'I don't defy you, Bywater. I say that I will not tell. I would not if I knew. It is no business of mine.'

'You little ninny! Don't you see that your obstinacy is injuring Tom Channing? Yorke is going in for the seniorship; is sure to get it—if it's true that Pye has given the promise to Lady Augusta. But, let it come out that he was the Jack-in-the-box, and his chance falls to the ground. And you won't say a word to do good to your brother!'

Charley shook his head. He did not take the bait. 'And Tom himself would be the first to punish me for doing wrong! He never forgives a sneak. It's of no use your keeping me, Bywater.'

'Listen, youngster. I have my suspicions; I have had them all along; and I have a clue—that's more. But, for a certain reason, I think my suspicions and my clue point to the wrong party; and I don't care to stir in it till I am sure. One—two—three! for the last time. Will you tell me?'

'No.'

'Then, look you, Miss Charles Channing. If I do go and denounce the wrong party, and find out afterwards that it is the wrong one, I'll give you as sweet a drubbing as you ever had, and your girl's face shan't save you. Now go.'

He propelled Charley from him with a jerk, and propelled him against Mr. Huntley, who was at that moment turning the corner close to them, on his way from Mr. Galloway's office.

'You can't go through me, Charley,' said Mr. Huntley. 'Did you think I was made of glass, Bywater?'

'My patience!' exclaimed Bywater. 'Why, Harry was grumbling, not five minutes ago, that you were never coming home at all, Mr. Huntley.

'He was, was he? Is he here?'

'Oh, he's somewhere amongst the ruck of them, there,' cried Bywater, looking towards the distant boys. 'He wants you to see about this bother of the seniorship; if somebody doesn't, we shall get

up a mutiny, that's all. Here, Huntley,' he shouted at the top of his voice, 'here's an arrival from foreign parts.'

Some of the nearer boys looked round, and the word was passed to Huntley. Harry Huntley and the rest soon surrounded him, and Mr. Huntley had no cause to complain of the warmth of his reception. When news had recently arrived that Mr. Huntley was coming home, the boys had taken up the hope of his interference. Of course, school-boy-like, they all entered upon it eagerly.

'Stop, stop, stop!' said Mr. Huntley. 'One at a time. How can I hear, if you all talk together? Now, what's the grievance?'

They detailed it as rationally and with as little noise as it was in their nature to do. Huntley was the only senior present, but Gaunt came up during the conference.

'It's all a big cram, Mr. Huntley,' cried Tod Yorke. 'My brother Gerald says that Jenkins dreamt it.'

'I'll "dream" you, if you don't keep your tongue silent, Tod Yorke,' reprimanded Gaunt. 'Take yourself off to a distance. Mr. Huntley,' he added, turning to that gentleman, 'it is certain that Lady Augusta said it; and we can't think she'd say it, unless Pye promised it. It *is* unfair upon Channing and Huntley.'

A few more words given to the throng, upon general matters—for Mr. Huntley touched no more on the other subject—and then he continued his way to Lady Augusta's. As he passed the house of the Reverend Mr. Pye, that gentleman was coming out of it. Mr. Huntley, a decisive, straightforward man, entered upon the matter at once, after some moments spent in greeting.

'You will pardon my speaking of it to you personally,' he said, when he had introduced it. 'In most cases I consider it perfectly unjustifiable for the friends of boys in a public school to interfere with the executive of its master; but this is different. Is it, or is it not correct, that there is an intention afloat to exalt Yorke to the seniorship?'

'Mr. Huntley, you must be aware that in *no case* can the head master of a public school allow himself to be interfered with or questioned,' was the reply of the master.

'I hope you will meet this amicably,' returned Mr. Huntley. 'I have no other wish than to be friendly; quite so. We all deem ourselves under obligations to you, Mr. Pye, and esteem you highly; we could not have, or wish, a better preceptor for our sons. But in this instance, my duty is plain. The injustice—if any such injustice is contemplated—tells particularly upon Tom Channing and my son. Mr. Channing does not

give ear to it; I would rather not: nevertheless, you must pardon me for acting, in the uncertainty, as though it had foundation. I presume you cannot be ignorant of the dissatisfied feeling that reigns in the school?'

'I have intimated that I will not be questioned,' said Mr. Pye.

'Quite right. I merely wished to express a hope that there may be no foundation for the rumour. If Tom Channing and Harry forfeit their rights legally, through want of merit, or ill conduct, it is not I that would urge a word in their favour. Fair play's a jewel; and the highest boy in the school should have no better chance given him than the lowest. But if the two senior boys do not so forfeit their rights, Yorke must not be exalted above them.'

'Who is to dictate to me?' demanded Mr. Pye.

'Certainly not I,' replied Mr. Huntley, in a courteous but firm tone. 'Were the thing to take place, I should simply demand, through the Dean and Chapter, that the charter of the school might be consulted, as to whether its tenets had been strictly followed.'

The head master made no reply. Neither did he appear angry; only impassible. Mr. Huntley had certainly hit the right nail upon the head: for the master of Helstonleigh College school was

entirely under the control of the Dean and Chapter.

'I can speak to you upon this all the more freely and with better understanding, since it is not my boy who stands any chance,' said Mr. Huntley, with a cordial smile. 'Tom Channing heads him on the rolls.'

'Tom Channing will not be the senior; I have no objection to affirm so much to you,' observed the master, falling in with Mr. Huntley's manner. 'This sad affair of his brother Arthur's debars him.'

'It ought not to debar him, even were Arthur guilty,' warmly returned Mr. Huntley.

'In justice to Tom Channing himself, no. But,' and the master dropped his voice to a confidential tone, 'it is necessary sometimes to study the prejudices taken up by a school; to see them, and not to appear to see them—if you understand me. Were Tom Channing made the school's head, part of the school would rise up in rebellion; and some of the boys would, no doubt, be removed from it. For the peace of the school alone, it could not be done; the boys would not now obey him as senior, and there would be perpetual warfare, resulting we know not in what.'

'Arthur Channing was not guilty. I feel as sure of it as I do of my own life.'

'He is looked upon as guilty by those who must know best, from their familiarity with the details,' rejoined Mr. Pye. 'For my own part, I have no resource but to believe him so. I regard it as one of those anomalies which you cannot understand, or would believe in, but that it happens under your own eye; where the moment's yielding to temptation is at variance with the general character, with the whole past life. Of course, in these cases, the disgrace is reflected upon relatives and connections, and they have to suffer for it. I cannot help the school's resenting it upon Tom.'

'It will be cruel to deprive Tom of the seniorship upon these grounds,' remonstrated Mr. Huntley.

'To himself individually,' assented the master. 'But it is well that one, promoted to a foundation-school's seniorship, should be free from moral taint. Were there no feeling whatever against Tom Channing in the school, I do not think I could, consistent with my duty and with a due regard to the fitness of things, place him as senior. I am sorry for the boy; I always liked him; and he has been of good report both as to scholarship and conduct.'

'I know one thing,' said Mr. Huntley: 'that you may search the school through, and not find so good a senior as Tom Channing would make.'

'He would have made a very good one, there's no doubt. Would have ruled the boys well and firmly, though without oppression. Yes, we lose a good senior in Tom Channing.'

There was no more to be said. Mr. Huntley felt that the master was thoroughly decided; and, for the other matter, touching Yorke, he had done with it until the time of appointment. As he went musing on, he began to think that Mr. Pye might be right with regard to depriving Tom of the seniorship, however unjust it might appear to Tom himself. Mr. Huntley remembered that not one of the boys, except Gaunt, had mentioned Tom Channing's name in his recent encounter with them; they had spoken of the injustice of exalting Yorke over *Harry Huntley*. He had not much noticed it at the time.

He proceeded to Lady Augusta's, and Constance was informed of his visit. She had three pupils at Lady Augusta's now, for that lady had kindly insisted that Constance should bring Annabel to study with her daughters, during the absence of Mrs. Channing. Constance left them to themselves and entered the drawing-room. Pretty Constance! so fresh, so lovely, in her simple dress of muslin, and her smoothly-braided hair. Mr. Huntley caught her hands, and imprinted a very fatherly kiss upon her fair forehead.

'That is from the absentees, Constance. I told them I should give it to you. And I bring you the bravest news, my dear. Mr. Channing was already finding benefit; he was, indeed. There is every hope that he will be restored.'

Constance was radiant with delight. To see one who had met and stayed with her father and mother at their far-off place of sojourn, was almost like seeing them.

'And now, my dear, I want a word with you about all those untoward trials and troubles, which appear to have come thickly during my absence,' continued Mr. Huntley. 'First of all, as to yourself. What mischief-making wind has been arising between you and William Yorke?'

The expression of Constance's face changed to sadness, and her cheeks grew crimson.

'My dear, you will not misunderstand me,' he resumed. 'I heard of these things at Borcette, and I said that I should undertake to inquire into them in the place of your father: just as he, health permitting him, would have undertaken for me in my absence, did any trouble arise to Ellen. Is it true that you and Mr. Yorke have parted?

'Yes,' faltered Constance.

'And the cause?'

Constance strove to suppress her tears. 'You

can do nothing, Mr. Huntley; nothing whatever. Thank you all the same.'

'He has made this accusation upon Arthur the plea for breaking his engagement?'

'I could not marry him with this cloud upon me,' she murmured. 'It would not be right.'

'Cloud upon *you!*' hastily ejaculated Mr. Huntley. 'The accusation of Arthur was the sole cause, then, of your parting?'

'Yes; the sole cause which led to it.'

Mr. Huntley paused, apparently in thought. 'He is presented to Hazeldon Chapel, I hear. Did his rupture with you take place *after* that occurrence?'

'I see what you are thinking,' she impulsively cried, caring too much for Mr. Yorke not to defend him. 'The chief fault of the parting was mine. I felt that it would not do to become his wife, being—being—' she hesitated much—'Arthur's sister. I believe that he also felt it. Indeed, Mr. Huntley, there is no help for it; nothing can be done.'

'Knowing what I do of William Yorke, I am sure that the pain of separation must be keen, whatever may be his pride. Constance, unless I am mistaken, it is equally keen to you.'

Again rose the soft damask blush in the face of Constance. But she answered decisively: 'Mr.

Huntley, I pray you to allow the subject to cease. Nothing can bring about a renewal of the engagement between myself and Mr. Yorke. It is irrevocably at an end.'

'Until Arthur shall be cleared, you mean?'

'No,' she answered—a vision of Hamish and *his* guilt flashing across her—'I mean for good.'

'Why does not Arthur assert his innocence to Mr. Yorke? Constance, I am sure you know, as well as I do, that he is not guilty. *Has* he asserted it?'

A rush of glowing crimson now. The questions were becoming close. She made no answer.

'As I would have wished to serve you, so will I serve Arthur,' said Mr. Huntley. 'I told your father and mother, Constance, that I should make it my business to investigate the charge against him; I shall leave not a stone unturned to bring his innocence to light.'

The avowal threw Constance into a panic, and she lost her self-possession. 'Oh don't! don't!' she uttered. 'You must not, indeed! you do not know the mischief it might do.'

'Mischief to what?—to whom?' exclaimed Mr. Huntley.

Constance buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears. The next moment she had raised it, and taken Mr. Huntley's hand between hers.

'You are papa's friend! you would do us good and not harm—is it not so?' she beseechingly said.

'My dear child,' he exclaimed, quite confounded by her words—her distress, 'you know that I would not harm any of you for the world.'

'Then *pray* do not seek to dive into that unhappy story,' she implored. 'It must not be too closely looked into.'

And Mr. Huntley quitted Constance, like a man who walks upon his head, so entirely amazed was he. What could be the puzzle?

As he was going through the cloisters—his nearest way to the town—Roland Yorke came flying up. With his usual scant ceremony, he passed his arm within Mr. Huntley's. 'Galloway's come in now,' he exclaimed, 'and I am off to the bank to pay in a bag of money for him. Jenkins told him you had called. Just hark at that clatter!'

The clatter, alluded to by Mr. Roland, was occasioned by the tramp of the choristers on the cloister flags. They were coming up behind, full speed, on their way from the school-room to enter the cathedral, for the bell had begun for service.

'And here comes that beautiful relative of mine,' continued Roland, as he and Mr. Huntley passed the college entrance and turned to the west gate of the cloisters. 'Would you credit it, Mr. Huntley, that he has turned out a sneak?

He has. He was to have married Constance Channing, you know; and, for fear Arthur should have touched the note, he has declared off it. If I were Constance, I would never allow the fellow to speak to me again.'

Apparently it was the course Mr. Roland himself intended to observe. As the Rev. Mr. Yorke, who was coming in to service, drew near, Roland strode on, his step haughty, his head in the air, which was all the notice he vouchsafed to take. Probably the minor canon did not care very much for Mr. Roland's notice, one way or the other; but his eye lighted with pleasure at the sight of Mr. Huntley, and he advanced to him, his hand outstretched.

But Mr. Huntley—a man given to show in his manner his likes and dislikes—would not see the hand, would not stop at all, but passed Mr. Yorke with a distant bow. That gentleman had fallen pretty deep in his estimation, since he heard of the rupture with Constance Channing. Mr. Yorke stood for a moment as if petrified, and then strode on his way with a step as haughty as Roland's.

Roland burst into a glow of delight. 'That's the way to serve him, Mr. Huntley! I hope he'll get cut by every man in Helstonleigh.'

CHAPTER XIV.

GERALD YORKE MADE INTO A 'BLOCK.'

The Rev. Mr. Yorke, in his surplice and hood, stood in his stall in the cathedral. His countenance was stern, absorbed; like that of a man who is not altogether at peace with himself. Let us hope that he was absorbed in the sacred service in which he was taking a part: but we all know, to our cost, that the spirit will wander at these times; that worldly thoughts obtrude themselves. The very greatest divine that the Church boasts is not always free from them.

Not an official part in the service was Mr. Yorke taking, that afternoon: the duty was being performed by the head-master, whose week it was to take it. Very few people indeed were at service, and still less of the clergy; the dean was present, but not one of the chapter.

Arthur Channing sat in his place at the organ. Arthur's thoughts, too, were wandering; and—you know it is of no use to make people out to be better than they are—wandering to things espe-

cially mundane. Arthur had not ceased to look out for something to do, to replace the weekly funds lost when he left Mr. Galloway's. He had not yet been successful: employment is more easily sought than found, especially by one lying under doubt, as he was. But he had now heard of something which he hoped he might gain.

Jenkins, saying nothing to Roland Yorke or to anybody else, had hurried to Mr. Channing's house that day betweeen one and two o'clock; and the hurrying there and back had probably caused that temporary increase of cough, which you heard of a chapter or two back. Jenkins's errand was to inform Arthur that Dove and Dove (solicitors in the town, who were by no means so dove-like as their name) required a temporary clerk, and he thought Arthur might suit. Arthur had asked Jenkins to keep a look-out for him.

'Is one of their clerks leaving?' Arthur inquired.

'One of them met with an accident last night up at the railway-station,' replied Jenkins. 'Did you not hear of it, sir?'

'I heard of that. I did not know who it was that was hurt. He was trying to cross the line, was he not?'

'Yes, sir. It was Marston. He had been out with some friends, and had taken, it is thought,

more than was good for him. A porter pulled him back, but Marston fell, and the engine crushed his foot. He will be laid up two months, the doctors say, and Dove and Dove are looking out for somebody to fill his place for the time. If you would like to take it, sir, you could be looking out for something else while you are there. You would more readily get the two hours' daily leave of absence from a place like that, where they keep three or four clerks, than you would from where they keep but one.'

'If I like to take it!' repeated Arthur. 'Will they like to take me? That's the question. Thank you, Jenkins, I'll see about it at once.'

He was not able to do so immediately that Jenkins left; for Dove and Dove's offices were situated at the other end of the town, and he might not be back in time for service. So he waited and went first to college, and sat, I say, in his place at the organ, his thoughts filled, in spite of himself, with the new project.

The service came to an end: it had seemed long to Arthur—so prone are we to estimate time by our own feelings—and his voluntary, afterwards, was played a shade faster than usual. Then he quitted the Cathedral by the front entrance, and hastened to the office of Dove and Dove.

Arthur had had many a rebuff of late, when bent on a similar application, and his experience taught him that it was best, if possible, to see the principals: not to subject himself to the careless indifference or to the insolence of a clerk. Two young men were writing at a desk when he entered. 'Can I see Mr. Dove?' he inquired.

The elder of the writers scrutinized him through the railings of the desk: 'Which of them?' asked he.

'Either,' replied Arthur; 'Mr. Dove, or Mr. Alfred Dove. It does not matter.'

'Mr. Dove's out, and Mr. Alfred Dove's not at home,' was the response. 'You'll have to wait, or to call again.'

He preferred to wait: and in a very few minutes Mr. Dove came in. Arthur was taken into a small room, so full of papers that it seemed difficult to turn in it, and there he stated his business.

'You are a son of Mr. Channing's, I believe, said Mr. Dove. He spoke morosely, coarsely; and he had a morose and coarse countenance—the sure index of the mind, in him, as in others. 'Was it you who figured in the proceedings at the Guildhall some few weeks back?'

You may judge whether the remark called the

blood to Arthur's face. He suppressed his mortification, and spoke bravely.

'It was myself, sir. I was not guilty. My employment in your office would be the copying of deeds solely, I presume, which would afford me little temptation to be dishonest, even were I inclined to be.

Had anybody paid Arthur in gold to keep in that little bit of sarcasm, he could not have helped speaking it. Mr. Dove caught up the idea that the words *were* uttered in sarcasm, and scowled fitfully.

'Marston was worth twenty-five shillings a week to us: and gained it. You would not be worth half as much.'

'You do not know what I should be worth, sir, unless you tried me. I am a quick and correct copyist; but I should not look to receive so much as an ordinary clerk, on account of having to attend the Cathedral for morning and afternoon service. Wherever I go, I must have that privilege allowed me.'

'Then I don't think you'll get it with us. But look here, young Channing, it is my brother who undertakes the engaging and the management of he clerks—you can speak to him.'

'Can I see him this afternoon, sir?'

'He'll be in presently. Of course, we could not

admit you into our office without some one becoming security. You must be aware of that.

The words seemed like a checkmate to Arthur, and he stopped in hesitation. 'Is it usual, sir?'

'Usual—no! But it is necessary in *your* case.'

There was a coarse, pointed stress upon the 'your,' natural to the man. Arthur turned away. For a moment he felt that to Dove and Dove's he could not and would not go; every feeling within him rebelled against it. Presently the rebellion calmed down, and he began to think about the security.

It would be of little use, he was sure, to apply to Mr. Alfred Dove—who was a shade coarser than Mr. Dove, if anything—unless prepared to say that security could be furnished. His father's he thought he might command: but he was not sure of that, under present circumstances, without first speaking to Hamish. He turned his steps to Guild Street, his unhappy position pressing with unusual weight upon his feelings.

'Can I see my brother?' he inquired of the clerks in the office.

'He has some gentlemen with him just now, sir. I dare say you can go in.'

There was nothing much amiss in the words; but in the tone there was. It was indicative of slight, of contempt. It was the first time Arthur

had been there since the suspicion had fallen on him, and they seemed to stare at him as if he had been a wild hyena; not a respectable hyena either.

He entered Hamish's room. Hamish was talking with two gentlemen, strangers to Arthur, but they were on the point of leaving. Arthur stood away against the wainscoting by the corner table, waiting till they were gone, his attitude, his countenance, his whole appearance indicative of depression and sadness.

'Hamish closed the door, and turned to him. He laid his hand kindly upon his shoulder; his voice was expressive of the kindest sympathy. 'So you have found your way here once more, Arthur! I thought you were never coming again. What can I do for you, lad?'

'I have been to Dove and Dove's. They are in want of a clerk. I think perhaps they would take me; but, Hamish, they want security.'

'Dove and Dove's,' repeated Hamish. 'Nice gentlemen, both of them!' he added, in his half pleasant, half sarcastic manner. 'Arthur, boy, I'd not be under Dove and Dove if they offered me a gold nugget a day, as weighty as the Queen's crown. You must not go there.'

'They are not agreeable men; I know that; they are not men who are liked in Helstonleigh, but what difference will that make to me? So long a

I turn out their parchments properly engrossed, that is all I need care for.'

'What has happened? Why are you looking so sad?' reiterated Hamish, who could not fail to perceive that there was some strange grief at work.

'Is my life so sunny just now, that I can always be as bright as you?' retorted Arthur—for Hamish's undimmed gaiety did sometimes jar upon his wearied spirit. 'I shall go to Dove and Dove's if they will take me,' he added resolutely. 'Will you answer for me, Hamish, in my father's name?'

'What amount of security do they require?' asked Hamish. And it was a very proper, a very natural question; but even that grated on the nerves of Arthur.

'Are you afraid of me?' he rejoined. 'Or do you fear my father would be?'

'I daresay they would take my security,' was the reply of Hamish. 'I will answer for you to any amount. That is,' and again came his gleesome smile, 'to any amount they may deem me good for. If they don't like mine, I can offer my father's. Will that do, Arthur?'

'Thank you; that is all I want.'

'Don't go to Dove and Dove's, old boy,' Hamish said again, as Arthur was leaving the room. 'Wait patiently for something more desirable to turn up.

There's no such great hurry. I wish there was room for you to come here!'

'It is but a temporary thing, it is not for long,' replied Arthur; and he went out.

On going back to Dove and Dove's, the first person he saw, upon opening the door of the clerks' room, was Mr. Alfred Dove. He appeared to be in a passion over something that had gone wrong, and was talking fast and furiously.

'What do you want?' he asked, wheeling round upon Arthur. Arthur replied by intimating that he would be glad to speak with him.

'Can't you speak, then?' returned Mr. Alfred Dove. 'I am not deaf.'

Thus met, Arthur did not repeat his wish for privacy. He intimated his business, uncertain whether Mr. Alfred Dove had heard of it or not; and stated that the security could be given.

'I don't know what you mean about "security,"' was Mr. Alfred Dove's rejoinder. 'What security?'

'Mr. Dove said that if I came into your office security would be required,' answered Arthur. 'My friends are ready to give it.'

'Mr. Dove told you that, did he? Just like him. He has nothing to do with the details of the office. Did he know who you are?'

'Certainly he did, sir.'

'I should have thought not,' offensively returned Mr. Alfred Dove. 'You must possess some assurance, young man, to come after a place in a respectable office. Security, or no security, we can't admit one into ours, who lies under the accusation of being light-fingered.'

It was the man all over. Hamish had said 'Don't go to Dove and Dove's.' Mr. Alfred Dove stood with his finger pointing to the door, and the two clerks stared in an insolent manner at Arthur. With a burning brow and rising spirit, Arthur left the room, and halted for a moment in the passage outside. 'Patience, patience,' he murmured to himself; 'patience, and trust in God!' He turned into the street quickly, and ran right against Mr. Huntley.

For a minute he could not speak. That gentleman detected his emotion, and waited till it was over. 'Have you been insulted, Arthur?' he breathed.

'Not much more so than I am now getting accustomed to be,' was the answer that came from his quivering lips. 'I heard they wanted a clerk, and went to offer myself. I am looked upon as a felon now, Mr. Huntley.'

'Being innocent as the day.'

'I am innocent before God,' spoke Arthur, in the impulse of his emotion, in the fervency of his heart. That he spoke but the solemn truth, it

was impossible to doubt, even had Mr. Huntley been inclined to doubt; and Arthur may be excused for forgetting his usual caution in the moment's bitterness.

'Arthur,' said Mr. Huntley, 'I promised your father and mother that I should do all in my power to establish your innocence. Can you tell me how I am to set about it?'

'You cannot do it at all, Mr. Huntley. Things must remain as they are.'

'Why?'

'I cannot explain why. I can only repeat it.'

'There is some strange mystery attaching to this.'

Arthur did not gainsay it.

'Arthur, if I am to let the affair rest as I find it, you must at least give me a reason why I may not act. What is it?'

'Because the investigation could only cause tenfold deeper trouble. You are very good to think of helping me, Mr. Huntley, but I must fight my own battle. Others must be quiet in this matter—for all our sakes.'

Mr. Huntley gazed after Arthur as he moved away. Constance first! Arthur next! What could be the meaning of it all? Where did the mystery lie? A resolution grew up in Mr. Huntley's heart that he would fathom it, for private reasons of his

own; and, in the impulse of the moment, he bent his steps, there and then, towards the police station, and demanded an interview with Roland Yorke's *bête noire*, Mr. Butterby.

But the cathedral is not quite done with for the afternoon.

Upon the conclusion of service, the dean lingered a few minutes in the nave, speaking to one of the vergers. When he turned to continue his way, he encountered the Rev. Mr. Pye, who had been taking off his surplice in the vestry. The choristers had been taking off their surplices also and were now gone trooping through the cloisters back to the school-room, not more gently than usual. The dean saluted Mr. Pye, and they walked out together.

'It is impossible to keep them quiet unless one's eye is continually upon them!' exclaimed the head master, half apologetically, as they came in view of the rebels.

'Boys will be boys,' said the dean. 'How has this foolish opinion arisen among them, that the names, standing first on the roll for the seniorship, will not be allowed to compete for it?' continued he, with much suavity.

Mr. Pye looked rather flushed. 'Really I am unable to say, Mr. Dean. It is difficult to account for all the notions taken up by schoolboys.'

'Boys do take up strange notions,' blandly assented the dean. 'But, I think, were I you, Mr. Pye, I would set their minds at rest in this respect. You have not yet deemed it worth while, I dare say: but it may perhaps be as well to do so. When the elders of a school once pick up the idea that their studies may not meet their due reward, it tends to render them indifferent. I remember once—it was just after I came here as dean, many years ago—the head master of the school exalted a boy to be senior who stood sixth or seventh on the rolls, and was positively half an idiot. But those times are past.'

'Certainly they are,' remarked the master.

'It was an unpleasant duty I had to perform then,' continued the dean, in the same agreeable tone, as if he were relating an anecdote: 'unpleasant both for the parents of the boy, and for the head master. But, as I remark, such things could not occur now. I think I would intimate to the king's scholars that they have nothing to fear.'

'It shall be done, Mr. Dean,' was the response of the master; and they exchanged bows as the dean turned into the deanery. 'She's three parts a fool, is that Lady Augusta,' muttered the master to the cloister-flags as he strode over them. 'Chattering magpie!'

As circumstances had it, the way was paved for the master to speak at once. Upon entering the college school-room, and passing the senior desk, he overheard whispered words of dispute between Gerald Yorke and Pierce senior, touching this very question, the seniorship. The master reached his own desk, gave it a sharp rap with a cane that lay near to hand, and spoke in his highest tone, looking red and angry.

'What *are* these disputes that appear to have been latterly disturbing the peace of the school? What is that you are saying, Gerald Yorke?—that the seniorship is to be yours?'

Gerald Yorke looked red in his turn, and somewhat foolish. 'I beg your pardon, sir, I was not saying precisely that,' he answered with hesitation.

'I think you were saying precisely that,' was the response of the master. 'My ears are quicker than you may fancy, Mr. Yorke. If you really have been hugging yourself with the notion that the promotion will be yours, the sooner you disabuse your mind of it, the better. Whoever gains the seniorship will gain it by priority of right, by scholarship, or by conduct—as the matter may be. Certainly not by anything else. Allow me to recommend you, one and all'—and the master threw his eyes round the desks generally, and gave another emphatic stroke with the

cane—'that you concern yourselves with your legitimate business; not with mine.'

Gerald did not like the reproof, or the news. He remained silent and sullen until the conclusion of school, and then went tearing home.

'A pretty block you have made of me!' he uttered, bursting into the presence of Lady Augusta, who had just returned home very warm, and sat fanning herself on a sofa before an open window.

'Why, what has taken you?' returned her ladyship.

'It's a shame, mother! It is! Filling me up with the news that I was to be senior! And now Pye goes and announces that I'm a fool for supposing so, and that it's to go in the regular rotation.'

'Pye does not mean it,' said my lady. 'There, hold your tongue, Gerald. I am too hot to talk.'

'I know that every fellow in the school will have the laugh at me, if I am to be made a regular block of, like this!' grumbled Gerald.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EARL OF CARRICK.

On a fine afternoon in August—and the month was now drawing towards its close—the 2·25 train from London steamed into the station at Helstonleigh, eight minutes behind time, and came to a standstill. Amongst the passengers who alighted, was a gentleman of middle age, as it is called—in point of fact, he had entered his fiftieth year, as the peerage would have told any curious inquirer. As he stepped out of the first-class carriage, several eyes were drawn towards him, for he was of notable height, towering above everybody; even above Roland Yorke, who was of good height himself, and stood on the platform waiting for him.

It was the Earl of Carrick, brother to Lady Augusta Yorke, and much resembling her—a pleasant-natured, high cheek-boned, easy face, betraying more of affable good humour than of high or keen intellect, and nothing of pride. The pride of the young Yorkes was sometimes talked of in Helstonleigh, but it came of their father's

side, not from Lady Augusta's. The earl spoke with a slight tincture of brogue, and shook both the hands of Roland heartily, as soon as he found that it was to Roland they belonged.

'Sure then! but I didn't know ye, Roland! If ye had twenty years more on to ye're head, I should have thought it was ye're father.'

'Have I grown like him, Uncle Carrick?'

'Ye've grown out of knowledge, me boy. And how's ye're mother, and how are the rest of ye?'

'Stunning,' responded Roland. 'They are all outside. She would bring the whole caravan up. The last time the lot came to the station, the two young ones got upon the line to dance a hornpipe on the rails; so she has kept them by her, and is making Gerald and Tod look after them. Where's your luggage, Uncle Carrick? Have you brought a servant?'

'Not I,' replied the earl. 'Servants are only troubles in other folk's houses, and me bit of luggage isn't much but I can look after it meeself. I hope they put it in,' he continued, looking about amid the boxes and portmanteaus, and unable to see his own.

The luggage was found at last, and given in charge to a porter; and Lord Carrick went out to meet his relatives. There were enough of them to meet—the whole caravan, as Roland had ex-

pressed it. Lady Augusta sat in her barouche—her two daughters and Constance and Annabel Channing with her. Little Percy and Frank, two most troublesome children, were darting in and out amid the waiting carriages, flys, and omnibuses; and Gerald and Tod had enough to do to keep them out of danger. It was so like Lady Augusta—the bringing them all to the station to welcome their uncle! Warm-hearted and impulsive, she had little more judgment than a child. Constance had in vain protested against herself and Annabel being pressed into the company; but her ladyship looked upon it as a sort of triumphal expedition, and was deaf to remonstrances.

The earl, warm-hearted and impulsive also, kissed them all, Constance included. She could not help herself; before she was aware of the honour intended her, the kiss was given—a hearty smack, like all the rest had. The well-meaning, simple-minded Irishman could not have been made to understand why he should not give a kiss of greeting to Constance, as readily as he gave it to his sister, or his sister's daughters. He protested that he remembered Constance and Annabel well. It may be questioned whether there was not more of Irish politeness than of truth in the assertion, though he had seen them occasionally, during his visit of three years before.

How were they all to get home? In and on the barouche, as all, save Roland, had come, to the gratification of the curious town? Lord Carrick wished to walk; his long legs were cramped; but Lady Augusta would not hear of it, and pulled him into the carriage. Gerald, Percy, and Frank were fighting for places on the box beside the driver, Tod intending to hang on behind, as he had done in coming, when the deep-toned college bell struck out the quarter to three, and the sound came distinctly to their ears, borne from the distance. It put a stop to the competition, so far as Gerald was concerned. He and Tod, startled half out of their senses, for they had not observed the lapse of time, set off back on foot as hard as they could go.

Meanwhile Roland, putting aside the two young ones with his strong hand, chose to mount the box himself; at which they both began to shriek and roar. Matters were compromised after a while; Percy was taken up by Roland, and Frank was, by some process of packing, stowed away inside. Then the cargo started; Lady Augusta happy as a princess, with her newly-met brother and her unruly children, and not caring in the least for the gaze of the people who stood in the street, or came rushing to their windows and doors to criticise the load.

Crowded as the carriage was, it was pleasanter to be in it, on that genial day, than to be at work in close rooms, dark shops, or dull offices. Amongst others, who were so confined and hard at work, was Jenkins at Mr. Galloway's. Poor Jenkins had not improved in health during the week or two that have elapsed since you last saw him. His cough was more troublesome still, and he was thinner and weaker. But Jenkins, humble and conscientious, thinking himself one who was not worth thinking of at all in comparison with others, would have died at his post rather than give in. Certainly, Arthur Channing had been discharged at the most inopportune time, for Mr. Galloway, as steward to the Dean and Chapter, had more to do about Michaelmas, than at any other period of the year. From that epoch until November, when the yearly audit took place, there was a good deal of business to get through.

On this afternoon, Jenkins was particularly busy. Mr. Galloway was away from home for a day or two—on business connected with that scapegrace cousin of his, Roland Yorke proclaimed; though whether Mr. Roland had any foundation for the assertion, save his own fancy, may be doubted—and Jenkins had it all upon his own shoulders. Jenkins, unobtrusive and meek though he was, was perfectly competent to manage, and Mr. Gallo-

way left him with entire trust. But it is one thing to be competent to manage, and another thing to be able to do two persons' work in one person's time; and, that, Jenkins was finding this afternoon. He had letters to write; he had callers to answer; he had the general business of the office to attend to; and there were, besides, deeds to prepare and copy. The copying of those deeds was the work pertaining to Roland Yorke. Roland did not seem to be in a hurry to come to them. Jenkins cast towards them an anxious eye, but Jenkins could do no more, for his own work could not be neglected. He felt very unwell that afternoon—oppressed, hot, unable to breathe. He wiped the moisture from his brow three or four times, and then he thought he might be the better for a little air, and opened the window. But the breeze, gentle as it was, made him cough, and he shut it again.

Of course, nobody, knowing Mr. Roland Yorke, could be surprised at his starting to the station to meet Lord Carrick, instead of to the office to do his work. He had gone home at one o'clock that day, as usual. Not that there was any necessity for his doing so, for the dinner hour was postponed until later, and it would have furthered the business of the office had he remained for once at his post. Had anybody suggested to Roland to do so, he

would have thought he was going to be worked to death. About twenty minutes past three he came clattering in.

'I say, Jenkins, I want holiday this afternoon.'

Jenkins, albeit the most accommodating spirit in the world, looked dubious, and cast a glance at the papers on Roland's desk. 'Yes, sir. But what is to be done about the Uphill farm leases?'

'Now, Jenkins, it's not a bit of good for you to begin to croak! If I gave in to you, you'd get as bad as Galloway. When I have got my mind off work, I can't settle to it again, and it's of no use to try. Those Uphill deeds are not wanted before to-morrow.'

'But they are wanted by eleven o'clock, sir, so that they must be finished, or nearly finished, to-night. You know, sir, there has been a fuss about them, and to-morrow, early, is the very latest time they must be sent in.'

'I'll get up, and be here in good time and finish them,' said Roland. 'Just put it to yourself, Jenkins, if you had an uncle that you'd not seen for seventeen ages, whether you'd like to leave him the minute he puts his foot over the door-sill?'

'I daresay I should not, sir,' said good-natured Jenkins, turning about in his mind how he could make time to do Roland's work. 'His lordship is come then, Mr. Roland?'

'His lordship's come, bag and baggage,' returned Roland. 'I say, Jenkins, what a thousand shames it is that he's not rich! He is the best-natured fellow alive, and would do anything in the world for us, if he only had the tin.'

'Is he not rich, sir?'

'Why, of course he's not,' confidentially returned Roland. 'Everybody knows the embarrassments of Lord Carrick. When he came into the estates, they had been mortgaged three deep by the last peer, my grandfather—an old guy in a velvet skull-cap, I remember, who took snuff incessantly—and my uncle, on his part, had mortgaged them three deep again, which made six. How Carrick manages to live, nobody knows; sometimes he's in Ireland, in the tumble-down old homestead, with just a couple of servants to wait upon him; and sometimes he's on the Continent, *en garçon*—if you know what that means. Now and then he gets a windfall when any of his tenants can be brought to pay up; but he is the easiest-going coach in life, and won't press them. Wouldn't I?'

'Some of those Irish tenants are very poor, sir, as I have heard.'

'Poor be hanged! What is a man's own, ought to be his own. Carrick says there are some years that he does not draw two thousand pounds, all told.

'Indeed, sir! That is not much for a peer.'

'It's not much for a commoner, let alone a peer,' said Roland, growing fierce. 'If I were no better off than Carrick, I'd drop the title; that's what I'd do. Why, if he could live as a peer ought, do you suppose we should be in the position that we are? One a soldier; one (and that's me) lowered to be a common old proctor; one a parson; and all the rest of it! If Carrick could be as other earls are, and have interest with the Government, and that, we should stand a chance of getting properly provided for. Of course, he can make interest with nobody while his estates bring him in next door to nothing.'

'Are there no means of improving his estates, Mr. Roland?' asked Jenkins.

'If there were, he's not the one to do it. And I don't know that it would do him any material good, after all,' acknowledged Roland. 'If he gets one thousand a-year, he spends two; and if he had twenty thousand, he'd spend forty. It might come to the same in the long run, so far as he goes: *we* might be the better for it; and should be. It's a shame, though, that we should need to be the better for other folk's money; if this were not the most unjust world going, everybody would have fortunes of their own.'

After this friendly little bit of confidence touch-

ing his uncle's affairs, Roland prepared to depart. 'I'll be sure to come in good time in the morning, Jenkins, and set to it like a brick,' was his parting salutation.

Away he went. Jenkins, with his poor aching head and his harassing cough, applied himself diligently, as he ever did, to the afternoon's work, and got through it by six o'clock, which was later than usual. There then remained the copying, which Mr. Roland Yorke ought to have done. Knowing the value of Roland's promises, and knowing also that if he kept this promise ever so strictly, the amount of copying was more than could be completed in time, if left to the morning, Jenkins did as he had been aware he must do, when talking with Roland—took it home with him.

The parchments under his arm, he set out on his walk. What could be the matter with him, that he felt so weak? he asked himself as he went along. It must be, he believed, the having gone without his dinner. Jenkins generally went home to dinner at twelve, and returned at one; occasionally, however, he did not go till two, according to the exigencies of the office; this day, he had not gone at all, but had cut a sandwich at breakfast-time and brought it with him in his pocket.

He had proceeded as far as the elm trees in

the Boundaries—for Jenkins generally chose the quiet cloister way for his road home—when he saw Arthur Channing advancing towards him. With the ever-ready, respectful, cordial smile with which he was wont to greet Arthur whenever he saw him, Jenkins quickened his steps. But suddenly the smile seemed to fix itself upon his lips and the parchments fell from his arm, and he staggered against the palings. But that Arthur was at hand to support him, he might have fallen to the ground.

'Why, what is it, Jenkins?' asked Arthur, kindly, when Jenkins was beginning to recover himself.

'Thank you, sir; I don't know what it could have been. Just as I was looking at you, a mist seemed to come before my eyes, and I felt giddy. I suppose it was a sort of faintness that came over me. I had been thinking that I felt weary. Thank you very much, sir.'

'Take my arm, Jenkins,' said Arthur, as he picked up the parchments, and took possession of them. 'I'll see you home.'

'Oh, no, sir, indeed,' protested simple-hearted Jenkins; 'I'd not think of such a thing. I'd feel quite ashamed, sir, at the thought of your being seen arm-in-arm with me in the street. I can go quite well alone; I can, indeed, sir.'

Arthur burst out laughing. 'I wish you wouldn't be such an old duff, Jenkins—as the college boys have it! Do you suppose I should let you go home by yourself? Come along.'

Drawing Jenkins's arm within his own, Arthur turned with him. Jenkins really did not like it. Sensitive to a degree was he: and, to his humble mind, it seemed that Arthur was out of place, walking familiarly with him.

'You must have been doing something to tire yourself,' said Arthur as they went along.

'It has been a pretty busy day, sir, now Mr. Galloway's away. I did not go home to dinner, for one thing.'

'And Mr. Roland Yorke absent for another, I suppose?'

'Only this afternoon, sir. His uncle, Lord Carrick, has arrived. 'Oh, sir!' broke off Jenkins, stopping in a panic, 'here's his lordship the bishop coming along! Whatever shall you do?'

'Do!' returned Arthur, scarcely understanding him. 'What should I do?'

'To think that he should see you thus with the like of me!'

It amused Arthur exceedingly. Poor, lowly-minded Jenkins! The bishop appeared to divine the state of the case, for he stopped when he came

up. Possibly, he was struck by the wan hue which overspread Jenkins's face.

'You look ill, Jenkins,' he said, nodding to Arthur Channing. 'Keep your hat on, Jenkins—keep your hat on.'

'Thank you, my lord,' replied Jenkins, disregarding the injunction touching his hat. 'A sort of faintness came over me just now under the elm trees, and this gentleman insisted upon walking home with me, in spite of my protestations to——'

Jenkins was stopped by a fit of coughing—a long, violent fit, sounding hollow as the grave. The bishop watched him till it was over. Arthur watched him.

'I think you should take better care of yourself, Jenkins,' remarked his lordship. 'Is any physician attending you?'

'Oh, my lord, I am not poorly enough yet for that. My wife made me go to Mr. Hurst the other day, my lord, and he gave me a bottle of something. But he said it was not medicine that I wanted.'

'I would advise you to go to a physician, Jenkins. A stitch in time saves nine, you know,' the bishop added, in his free good humour.

'So it does, my lord. Thank your lordship for thinking of me,' added Jenkins, as the bishop said

good afternoon, and pursued his way. And then, and not till then, did Jenkins put on his hat again.

'Mr. Arthur, would you be so kind as not to say anything to my wife about my being poorly?' asked Jenkins, as they drew near to his home. 'She'd be, perhaps, for saying I should not go again yet to the office; and a pretty dilemma that would put me in, Mr. Galloway being absent. She'd get so fidgetty, too: she kills me with kindness, if she thinks I am ill. The broth and arrowroot, and other messes, sir, that she makes me swallow, are untellable.'

'All right,' said Arthur.

But the intention was frustrated. Who should be standing at the shop-door but Mrs. Jenkins herself. She saw them before they saw her, and she saw that her husband looked like a ghost, and was supported by Arthur. Of course, she drew her own conclusions; and Mrs. Jenkins was one who did not allow her conclusions to be put down. When Jenkins found that he was seen and suspected, he held out no longer, but honestly confessed the worst—that he had been taken with a giddiness.

'Of course,' said Mrs. Jenkins, as she pushed a chair here and another there, partly in temper, partly to free the narrow passage through the shop to the parlour. 'I have been expecting nothing

less all day. Every group of footsteps slower than usual, I have thought it was a shutter arriving and you on it, dropped dead from exhaustion. Would you believe'—turning short round on Arthur Channing—'that he has been such a donkey as to fast from breakfast time? And with that cough upon him!'

'Not quite to fast, my dear,' deprecated Jenkins. 'I ate the paper of sandwiches.'

'Paper of rubbish!' retorted Mrs. Jenkins. 'What good do sandwiches do a weakly man? You might eat a ton-load, and be none the better for it. Well, Jenkins, you may take your leave of having your own way.'

Poor Jenkins might have deferentially intimated that he never did have it. Mrs. Jenkins resumed:

'He said he'd carry a sandwich with him this morning, instead of coming home to dinner. I said, 'No.' And afterwards I was such a simpleton as to yield! And here's the effects of it! Sit yourself down in the easy chair,' she added, taking Jenkins by the two arms and pushing him into it. 'And I'll make the tea now,' concluded she, turning to the table where the tea-things were set out. 'There's some broiled fowl coming up for you.'

'I don't feel as if I could eat this evening,' Jenkins ventured to say.

'*Not eat!*' she repeated with emphasis. 'You had better eat—that's all. I don't want to have you falling down exhausted here, as you did in the Boundaries.'

'And as soon as you have had your tea, you should go to bed,' put in Arthur.

'I can't, sir. I have got three or four hours work at that deed. It must be done.'

'At this?' returned Arthur, opening the papers he had carried home. 'Oh, I see; it is a lease. I'll copy this for you, Jenkins. I have nothing to do to-night. You take your ease, and go to bed.'

And in spite of their calls, Jenkins' protestations against taking up his time and trouble, and Mrs. Jenkins's proffered invitation to partake of tea and broiled fowl, Arthur departed, carrying off the work.

CHAPTER XVI.

ELLEN HUNTLEY.

'A PRETTY time o' day this is to deliver the letters It's eleven o'clock!'

'I can't help it. The train broke down, and was three hours behind its time.'

'I dare say! You letter-men want looking up: that's what it is. Coming to folks's houses at eleven o'clock, when they have been a-waiting and looking ever since breakfast time!'

'It's not my fault, I say. Take the letter.'

Judith received it with a grunt, for it was between her and the postman that the colloquy took place. A delay had occurred that morning in the delivery, and Judith was resenting it, feeling half inclined to reject the letter, now that it had come. The letters from Germany arrived irregularly; sometimes by the afternoon's post at four, sometimes by the morning; the only two deliveries in Helstonleigh. A letter had been fully expected this morning, and when the time passed over, they supposed there was none.

It was directed to Miss Channing. Judith, who was quite as anxious about her master's health as the children were, went off at once with it to Lady Augusta Yorke's, just as she was, without the ceremony of putting on a bonnet. Though she did wear a mob cap and a check apron, she looked what she was—a respectable servant in a respectable family; and the Boundaries regarded her as such, as she passed through them, the letter in her hand. Martha, Lady Augusta's housemaid, answered the door, presenting a contrast to Judith. Martha wore a crinoline as big as her lady's, and a starched-out muslin gown over it, with flounces and frillings, for Martha was 'dressed' for the day. Her arms, red and large, were displayed beneath her open sleeves, and something that looked like a bit of twisted lace was stuck on the back of her head. Martha called it her 'cap.' Judith was a plain servant, and Martha was a fashionable one; but I know which looked the best.

Judith would not give in the letter. She asked for the young mistress, and Constance came to her in the hall. 'Just open it, please, Miss Constance, and tell me how he is,' said she, anxiously; and Constance broke the seal of the letter.

'Borcette. Hotel Rosenbad, September.

'My dear Child,—Still better and better! The improvement, which I told you in my last

week's letter had begun to take place so rapidly as to make us fear it was but a deceitful one, turns out to have been real. Will you believe it, when I tell you that your papa can *walk!* He can, Constance. With the help of my arm, he can walk across the room and along the passage; and to-morrow he is going to try at getting down the first flight of stairs. None but God can know how thankful I am; not even my children. If this change has taken place in the first month (and it is not yet quite that), what may we not expect in the next—and the next? Your papa is writing to Hamish, and will confirm what I say.'

This much Constance read aloud. Judith gave a glad laugh. 'It's just as everybody told the master,' said she. 'A fine, strong, handsome man, like him, wasn't likely to be laid down for life like a babby, when he was hardly mid-aged. These doctors here be just so many muffs. When I get too old for work, I'll go to Germany myself, Miss Constance, and ask 'em to make me young again.'

Constance smiled. She was running her eyes over the rest of the letter, which was a long one. She caught sight of Arthur's name. There were some loving, gentle messages to him, and then these words: 'Hamish says Arthur applied at Dove and Dove's for a clerk's place, but did not come to terms with them. We are pleased that

he did not. Papa says he should not like to have one of his boys at Dove and Dove's.'

'And here's a little bit for you, Judith,' Constance said aloud. 'Tell Judith not to be over-anxious in her place of trust; and not to overwork herself, but to let Sarah take her full share. There is no hurry about the bed-furniture; Sarah can do it in an evening at her leisure.'

Judith received the latter portion of the message with scorn. ''Tisn't me that's going to let *her* do it! A fine do it would be, Miss Constance! The first thing I shall see when I go back now will be her head stretched out at one of the windows, and the kidney beans left in the kitchen to string and cut themselves!'

Judith turned to depart. She never would allow any virtues to her helpmate Sarah, who gave about the same trouble to her that young servants of twenty do give to old ones. Constance followed her to the door, saying something which had suddenly occurred to her mind about domestic affairs, when who should she meet, coming in, but the Rev. William Yorke! He had just left the Cathedral after morning prayers, and was calling in at Lady Augusta's.

Both were confused; both stopped, face to face, in hesitation. Constance grew crimson; Mr. Yorke pale. It was the first time they had met

since the parting. There was an angry feeling against Constance in the mind of Mr. Yorke; he considered that she had not treated him with proper confidence; and in his proud nature—the Yorke blood was his—he was content to resent it. He did not look to *lose* Constance eventually; he expected that the present storm would blow over some time, and that things would come right again. We are all too much given to trust to that vague 'some time.' In Constance's mind there existed a soreness against Mr. Yorke. He had doubted her; she had accepted (if he had not provoked) too readily her resignation of him. Unlike him, she saw no prospect of the future setting matters to rights; marry him, whilst the cloud lay upon Arthur, she would not, after what he had intimated of his opinion and sentiments: and that cloud could only be lifted at the expense of another.

They exchanged a confused greeting; neither conscious how it passed. Mr. Yorke's attention was then caught by the open letter in her hand—by the envelope bearing the foreign post-marks. 'How is Mr. Channing?' he asked.

'So much better that it seems little short of a miracle,' replied Constance. 'Mamma says,' glancing at the letter, 'that he can walk, leaning on her arm.'

'I am so glad to hear it! Hamish told me last week that he was improving, I trust it may go on to a cure.'

'Thank you,' replied Constance. And she made him a pretty little curtsey of state as she turned away, not choosing to see the hand he would fain have offered her.

Mr. Yorke's voice brought a head and shoulders out at the breakfast-room door. They belonged to Lord Carrick. He and Lady Augusta were positively at breakfast at that hour of the day. His lordship's eyes followed the light, pretty form of Constance as she disappeared up the staircase on her return to the school-room. William Yorke's were cast in the same direction. Then their eyes —the peer's and the clergyman's—met.

'Ye have given her up, I understand, Master William?'

'Master William' vouchsafed no reply. He deemed it a little piece of needless impertinence.

'Bad taste!' continued Lord Carrick. 'If I were but twenty years younger, and she'd not turn up her nose at me for a big daft of an Irishman, *you'd* not get her, me lad. She's the sweetest little thing I have come across this many a day.'

To which the Rev. William Yorke condescended no answer unless a haughty gesture expressive of

indignation, might be called one, as he brushed past Lord Carrick into the breakfast-room.

At that very hour, and in a breakfast-room also —though all signs of the meal had long been removed—were Mr. Huntley and his daughter. The same epithet of praise, just bestowed by Lord Carrick upon Constance Channing, might with equal justice be given to Ellen Huntley. She was a lovely girl, three or four years older than Harry, with pretty features and soft dark eyes. What's more, she was a good girl—a noble, generous-hearted, good girl, although (you know nobody is perfection) with a spice of self-will. For the latter quality I think Ellen was more indebted to circumstances than to Nature. Mrs. Huntley was dead, and a maiden sister of Mr. Huntley's, older than himself, resided with them and ruled Ellen; ruled her with an over-tight hand; not a kind one, not a judicious one; and that had brought out Miss Ellen's self-will. Miss Huntley was very starched, and prim, and stiff—very unnatural, in short—and she wished to make Ellen the same. Ellen rebelled, for she much disliked everything artificial. She was truthful, honest, straightforward; not unlike the character of Tom Channing. Miss Huntley complained that she was too straightforward to be ladylike; Ellen said she was sure she should never be otherwise

than straightforward, so it was of no use trying to be. Then Miss Huntley would take offence, and threaten Ellen with 'altering her will,' and that would vex Ellen more than anything. Young ladies rarely care for money, especially when they have plenty of it; and Ellen Huntley would have that, from her father. 'As if I cared for my aunt's money!' she would say. 'I wish she may not leave it to me.' And she was sincere in the wish. Their controversies frequently amused Mr. Huntley. Agreeing in heart and mind with his daughter, he would yet make a playful show of taking his sister's part. Miss Huntley knew it to be show—done to laugh at her—and would grow as angry with him as she was with Ellen.

Mr. Huntley was not laughing, however, on this morning. On the contrary, he appeared to be in a very serious, not to say solemn mood. He slowly paced the room, as was his custom when anything disturbed him, stopping at moments to reflect, buried in thought. Ellen sat at a table by the window, drawing. The house was Mr. Huntley's own—a white villa with a sloping lawn in front. It was situated outside the town, on a gentle eminence, and commanded a view of the charming scenery for which the county was famous.

Ellen, who had glanced up two or three times,

concerned to see the very stern, perplexed look on her father's face, at length spoke. 'Is anything the matter, papa?'

Mr. Huntley did not answer. He was standing close to the table then, apparently looking at Ellen, at her white morning dress and its blue ribbons: it, and she altogether, a fair picture. Probably, he saw neither her nor her dress—he was too deeply absorbed.

'You are not ill, are you papa?'

'Ill!' he answered, rousing himself. 'No, Ellen, I am not ill.'

'Then you have had something to vex you papa?'

'I have,' emphatically replied Mr. Huntley. 'And the worst is, that my vexation will not be confined to myself, I believe. It may extend to you, Ellen.'

Mr. Huntley's manner was so serious, his look so peculiar as he gazed upon her, that Ellen felt a rush of discomfort, and the colour spread itself over her fair face. She jumped to the conclusion that she had been giving offence—that Miss Huntley must have been complaining of her.

'Has my aunt been telling you about last night, papa? Harry had two of the college boys here, and I unfortunately laughed and talked with them,

and she said afterwards I had done it on purpose to annoy her. But I assure you, papa——'

'Never mind assuring me, child,' interrupted Mr. Huntley. 'Your aunt has said nothing to me; and if she had, it would go in at one ear and out at the other. It is worse business than any complaint that she could bring.'

Ellen laid down her pencil, and gazed at her father, awe-struck at his strange tone. 'What is it?' she breathed.

But Mr. Huntley did not answer. He remained perfectly still for a few moments, absorbed in thought: and then, without a word of any sort to Ellen, turned short round to leave the room, took his hat as he passed through the hall, and left the house.

Can you guess what it was that was troubling Mr. Huntley? Very probably, if you can put, as the saying runs, that and that together.

Convinced, as he was, that Arthur Channing was not, could not, be guilty of taking the bank-note, yet puzzled by the strangely tame manner in which he met the charge—confounded by the behaviour both of Arthur and Constance relating to it—Mr. Huntley had resolved, if possible, to dive into the mystery. He had his reasons for it. A very disagreeable, a very improbable suspicion, called forth by the facts, had darted across his

mind; *therefore* he resolved to penetrate to it. And he set to work. He questioned Mr. Galloway, he questioned Butterby, he questioned Jenkins, and he questioned Roland Yorke. He thus became as thoroughly conversant with the details of the transaction as it was possible for any one, save the actual thief, to be; and he drew his own deductions. Very reluctantly, very slowly, very cautiously, were they drawn, but very surely. The behaviour of Arthur and Constance could only have one meaning—that they were screening the real culprit. And that culprit must be Hamish Channing.

Unwilling as Mr. Huntley was to admit it, he had no other resource. He grew as certain of it as he was of his own life. He had loved and respected Hamish in no measured degree. He had observed the attachment springing up between him and his daughter, and he had been content to observe it. None were so worthy of her, in Mr. Huntley's eyes, as Hamish Channing, in all respects save one—wealth; and, of that, Ellen would have plenty. Mr. Huntley had known of the trifling debts that were troubling Hamish, and he found that those debts, immediately on the loss of the bank-note, had been partially satisfied. That the stolen money must have been thus applied, and that it had been taken for that purpose, he could not doubt.

Hamish! It nearly made Mr. Huntley's hair stand on end. That he must be silent over it, as were Hamish's own family, he knew—silent for Mr. Channing's sake. And what about Ellen?

There was the sad, very sad grievance. Whether Hamish went wrong, or whether Hamish went right, it was not of so much consequence to Mr. Huntley; but it might be to Ellen—in fact, he thought it would be. He had risen that morning resolved to hint to Ellen that any particular intimacy with Hamish must cease. But he was strangely indecisive over it: now that the moment was come, he almost doubted, himself, Hamish's guilt. All the improbabilities of the case rose up before him in marked colours; he lost sight of the condemning facts; and it suddenly occurred to him that it was scarcely fair to judge Hamish so completely without speaking to him. 'Perhaps he can account to me for the possession of the money which he applied to those debts,' thought Mr. Huntley. 'If so, in spite of appearances, I will not deem him guilty.'

He went out, on the spur of the moment, straight down to the office in Guild-street. Hamish was alone, not at all busy, apparently. He was standing up by the fireplace, his elbow on the mantelpiece, a letter from Mr. Channing (no doubt the one alluded to in Mrs. Channing's letter to Constance) in his hand. He received Mr. Huntley

with his cordial, sunny smile; spoke of the good news the letter brought, spoke of the accident which had caused the delay of the mail, and finally read out part of the letter, like Constance had to Judith.

It was all very well; but this only tended to embarrass Mr. Huntley. He did not like his task, and the more confidential they got over Mr. Channing's health, the worse it made it for him to enter upon. As chance had it, Hamish himself paved the way. He began telling of an incident which had taken place that morning, to the scandal of the town. A young man, wealthy but improvident, had been arrested for debt. Mr. Huntley had not yet heard of it.

'It stopped his day's pleasure,' laughed Hamish. 'He was going along with his gun and dogs, intending to pop at the partridges, when he got popped upon, himself, instead. Poor fellow! it was too bad to spoil his sport. Had I been a rich man, I should have felt inclined to bail him out.'

'The effect of running in debt,' remarked Mr. Huntley. 'By the way, Master Hamish, is there no fear of a like catastrophe for you?' he added, in a tone which Hamish might, if he liked, take for a jesting one.

'For me, sir?' returned Hamish.

'When I left Helstonleigh in June, a certain

young friend of mine was not quite free from a suspicion of such liabilities,' rejoined Mr. Huntley.

Hamish flushed rosy red. Of all people in the world, Mr. Huntley was the one from whom he would, if possible, have kept that knowledge, but he spoke up readily.

'I did owe a thing or two, it can't be denied,' acknowledged he. 'Men, better and wiser and richer than I, have owed money before me, Mr. Huntley.'

'Suppose they serve you as they have served Jenner this morning?'

'They will not do that,' laughed Hamish, seeming very much inclined to make a joke of the matter. 'I have squared up some, sufficiently to be on the safe side of danger, and I shall square up the rest.'

Mr. Huntley fixed his eyes upon him. 'How did you get the money to do it, Hamish?'

Perhaps it was the plain, unvarnished manner in which the question was put; perhaps it was the intent gaze with which Mr. Huntley regarded him; but, certain it is, that the flush on Hamish's face deepened to a glowing crimson, and he turned it from Mr. Huntley, saying nothing.

'Hamish, I have a reason for wishing to know.'

'To know what, sir?' asked Hamish, as if he would temporize, or stave off the question.

'Where did you get the money that you applied to liquidate, or partially to liquidate, your debts?'

'I cannot satisfy you, sir. The affair concerns no one but myself. I did get it, and that is sufficient.'

Hamish had come out of his laughing tone, and spoke as firmly as Mr. Huntley; but that the question had embarrassed him, was palpably evident. Mr. Huntley said good morning, and quitted the office without shaking hands. All his doubts were confirmed.

He went straight home. Ellen was where he had left her, still alone. Mr. Huntley approached her and spoke abruptly. 'Are you willing to give up all intimacy with Hamish Channing?'

She gazed at him in surprise, her complexion changing, her voice faltering. 'Oh, papa! what have they done?'

'Ellen, did I say "they?" The Channings are my dear friends, and I hope ever to call them such. They have done nothing unworthy of my friendship or of yours. I said Hamish.'

Ellen rose from her seat, unable to subdue her emotion, and stood with her hands clasped before Mr. Huntley. Hamish was far dearer to her than the world knew.

'I will leave it to your good sense, my dear,' Mr. Huntley whispered, glancing round, as if

not caring that even the walls should hear. 'I have liked Hamish very much, or you may be sure he would not have been allowed to come here so frequently. But he has forfeited my regard now, as he must forfeit that of all good men.'

She trembled excessively, almost to impede the words, when she would have asked what it was that he had done.

'I scarcely dare to breathe it to you,' said Mr. Huntley, 'for it is a thing that we must hush up, like the family are hushing it up. When that bank-note was lost, suspicion fell on Arthur.'

'Well, papa?' wonderingly resumed Ellen.

'It was not Arthur who took it. It was Hamish. And Arthur is bearing the stigma of it for his father's sake.'

Ellen grew pale. 'Papa, who says it?'

'No one *says* it, Ellen. But the facts leave no room to doubt. Hamish's own manner—I have just left him—leaves no room for it. He is indisputably guilty.'

Then Ellen's anger, her *straightforwardness* broke forth. She clasped her hands to pain, and her face grew crimson. 'He is *not* guilty, papa. I would answer for it with my own life. How dare they accuse him? how dare they asperse him? Is he not Hamish Channing?'

'Ellen! *Ellen!*'

Ellen burst into a passionate flood of tears. 'Forgive me, papa. If he has no one else to take his part, I will do it. I do not wish to be undutiful; and if you bid me never to see or speak to Hamish Channing again, I will implicitly obey you; but hear him spoken of as guilty, I will not. I wish I could stand up for him against the world.'

'After that, Miss Ellen Huntley, I think you had better sit down.'

Ellen sat down, and cried until she was calm.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

NOTHING of sufficient consequence to record here, occurred for some weeks to the Channing family, or to those connected with them. October came in; and in a few days would be decided the uncertain question of the seniorship. Gaunt would leave the college on the fifth; and on the sixth the new senior would be appointed. The head master had given no intimation whatever to the school as to which of the three seniors would obtain the promotion, and discussion ran high upon the probabilities. Some opined it would be Huntley; some, Gerald Yorke; a very few, Tom Channing. Countenanced by Gaunt and Huntley, as he had been throughout, Tom bore on his way, amid much cabal; but for the circumstance of the senior boy espousing (though not very markedly) his cause, his place would have been unbearable. Hamish attended to his customary duties in Guild Street, and sat up at night as usual in his bed-room, as the light of his candle testified to Judith's eyes.

Arthur tried bravely for a situation, and tried in vain; he could get nothing given to him—nobody seemed willing to take him on. There was nothing for it but to wait in hopeful patience. He took the organ daily, and copied, at home, the cathedral music. Constance was finding great favour with the Earl of Carrick—but you will hear more about that presently. Jenkins grew more like a shadow day by day. Roland Yorke went on in his impulsive, scapegrace fashion. Mr. and Mrs. Channing sent home news, hopeful and more hopeful, from Germany. And Charley, unlucky Charley, had managed to get into hot water with the college school.

Thus, uneventfully, had passed the month of September. October was now in, and the sixth rapidly approaching. What with the uncertainty prevailing, the preparation for the examination, which on that day would take place, and a little private matter, upon which some few were entering, the college school had just then a busy and exciting time of it.

Stephen Bywater sat in one of the niches of the cloisters, a pile of books by his side. Around him, in various attitudes, were gathered seven of the most troublesome of the tribe—Pierce senior, George Brittle, Tod Yorke, Fred Berkeley, Bill Simms, Mark Galloway, and Hurst, who had

now left the choir, but not the school. They were hatching mischief. Twilight overhung the cloisters; the autumn evenings were growing long, and this was a gloomy one. Half an hour, at the very least, had the boys been gathered there since afternoon school, holding a council of war in covert tones.

'Paid out he shall be, by hook or by crook,' continued Stephen Bywater, who appeared to be president—if talking more than his *confrères* constitutes one. 'The worst is, how is it to be done? One can't wallop him.'

'Not wallop him!' repeated Pierce senior, who was a bad-dispositioned boy, as well as a mischievous one. 'Why not, pray?'

'Not to any good,' said Bywater. '*I* can't, with that delicate face of his. It's like beating a girl.'

'That's true,' assented Hurst. 'No, it won't do to go in for beating; might break his bones, or something. I can't think what's the good of those delicate ones putting themselves into a school of this sort. A parson's is the place for them; eight gentlemanly pupils, treated as a private family, with a mild usher and a lady to teach the piano.'

The council burst into a laugh at Hurst's mocking tones, and Pierce senior interrupted it.

'I don't see why he shouldn't——'

'Say she, Pierce,' corrected Mark Galloway.

'She, then. I don't see why she shouldn't get a beating if she deserves it; it will teach her not to try her tricks on again. Let her be delicate; she'll feel it the more.'

'It's all bosh about his being delicate. She's not,' vehemently interrupted Tod Yorke, somewhat perplexed, in his hurry, with the personal pronouns. 'Charley Channing's no more delicate than we are. It's all in the look. As good say that detestable little villain, Boulter, is delicate, because he has got yellow curls. I vote for the beating.'

'I'll vote you out of the business, if you show insubordination, Mr. Tod,' cried Bywater. 'We'll pay out Miss Charley in some way, but it sha'n't be by beating him.'

'Couldn't we lock him up in the cloisters, like we locked up Ketch, and that lot; and leave him there all night?' proposed Berkeley.

'But there'd be the getting the keys?' debated Mark Galloway.

'As if we couldn't get the keys if we wanted to get them!' scoffingly retorted Bywater. 'We did old Ketch the other time, and we could do him again. *That* would not serve the young one out, the locking him up in the cloisters.'

'Wouldn't it, though!' said Tod Yorke. 'He'd be dead of fright before morning, he's so mortally afraid of ghosts.'

'Afraid of what?' cried Bywater.

'Of ghosts. He's a regular coward about them. He dare not go to bed in the dark for fear of their coming to him. He'd rather have five-and-twenty pages of Virgil to do, than he'd be left alone after nightfall.'

The notion so tickled Bywater, that he laughed till he was hoarse. Bywater could not understand the being afraid of 'ghosts.' Had Bywater met a whole army of ghosts, the encounter would only have afforded him pleasure.

'There never was a ghost seen yet, as long as anybody can remember,' cried he, when he came out of his laughter. 'I'd sooner believe in Gulliver's travels, than I'd believe in ghosts. What a donkey you are, Tod Yorke!'

'It's Charley Channing that's the donkey, not me,' cried Tod, fiercely. 'I tell you, if we locked him up here for a night, we should find him dead in the morning, when we came to let him out. Let's do it.'

'What, to find him dead in the morning!' exclaimed Hurst. 'You are a nice one, Tod!'

'Oh, well, I don't mean altogether dead, you know,' acknowledged Tod. 'But he'd have had a

mortal night of it! all his clothes gummed together from fright, I'll lay.'

'I don't think it would do,' deliberated Bywater 'A whole night—twelve hours, that would be—and in a fright all the time, if he *is* frightened. Look here! I have heard of folks losing their wits through a thing of the sort.'

'I won't go in for anything of that,' said Hurst. 'Charley's not a bad lot, and he sha'n't be harmed. A bit of a fright, or a bit of a whacking, not too much of either; that'll be the thing for Miss Channing.'

'Tod Yorke, who told you he was afraid of ghosts?' demanded Bywater.

'Oh, I know it,' said Tod. 'Annabel Channing was telling my sisters about it, for one thing: but I knew it before. We had a servant once who told us so: she had lived at the Channings. Some nurse frightened him when he was a youngster, and they have never been able to get the fear out of him since.'

'What a precious soft youngster he must have been!' said Mr. Bywater.

'She had used to get a ghost and dress it up and show it off to Miss Charley——'

'Get a ghost, Tod?'

'Bother! you know what I mean,' said Tod, testily. 'Get a broom or something of that sort,

and dress it up with a mask and wings: and he is as scared over it now as he ever was. I don't care what you say.'

'Look here!' exclaimed Bywater, starting from his niche, as a bright idea occurred to him. 'Let one of us personate a ghost, and appear to him! That would be glorious! It would give him a precious good fright for the time, and no harm done.'

If the boys had suddenly found the philosopher's stone, it could scarcely have afforded them so much pleasure as did this idea. It was received with subdued shouts of approbation: the only murmur of dissent to be heard was from Pierce senior. Pierce grumbled that it would not be 'half serving him out.'

'Yes, it will,' said Bywater. 'Pierce senior shall be the ghost: he tops us all by a head.'

'Hurst is as tall as Pierce senior.'

'That he's not,' interrupted Pierce senior, who was considerably mollified at the prospective honour being awarded to him. 'Hurst is not much above the tips of my ears. Besides, Hurst is fat; and you never saw a fat ghost yet.'

'Have you seen many ghosts, Pierce?' mocked Bywater.

'A few; in pictures. Wretched old scarecrows they always are, with a cadaverous face and lantern jaws.'

'That's the reason you'll do so well, Pierce,' said Bywater. 'You are as thin as a French herring, you know, with a yard and a half length of throat.'

Pierce received the doubtful compliment flatteringly, absorbed in the fine vista of mischief opening to him. 'How shall I get myself up, Bywater?' asked he, complaisantly. 'With horns and a tail?'

'Horns and a tail be bothered!' returned Hurst. 'It must be like a real ghost, all white and ghastly.'

'Of course it must,' acquiesced Bywater.

'I know a boy in our village that they served out like that,' interposed Bill Simms, who was a country lad, and boarded in Helstonleigh. 'They got a great big turnip, and scooped it out and made it into a man's face, and put a light inside, and stuck it on a post where he had to pass at night. He was so frightened that he died.'

'Cram!' ejaculated Tod Yorke.

'He did, though,' repeated Simms. 'They knew him before for an awful little coward, and they did it to have some fun out of him. He didn't say anything at the time; didn't scream, or anything of that; but after he got home he was taken ill, and the next day he died. My father was one of the jury on the inquest. He was a little chap with no father or mother—a ploughboy.'

'The best thing, if you want to make a ghost,' said Tod Yorke, 'is to get a tin plate full of salt and gin, and set it alight, and wrap yourself round with a sheet, and hold the plate so that the flame lights up your face. You never saw anything so ghastly. Scooped-out turnips are all bosh!'

'I could bring a sheet off my bed,' said Bywater. 'Thrown over my arm, they'd think at home I was bringing out my surplice. And if——'

A wheezing and coughing and clanking of keys interrupted the proceedings. It was Mr. Ketch, coming to lock up the cloisters. As the boys had no mind to be fastened in themselves, they gathered up their books, and waited in silence till the porter was close upon them. Then, with a sudden war-whoop, they sprung past him, very nearly startling the old man out of his senses, and calling forth from him a burst of hard words.

The above conversation, puerile and school-boyish as it may seem, was destined to lead to results all too important; otherwise it would not have been related here. You very likely may have discovered, ere this, that this story of the Helstonleigh college boys is not merely a work of imagination, but taken from facts of real life. Had you been in the cloisters that night with the boys—and you might have been—and heard Master William Simms, who was the son of a

wealthy farmer, tell the tale of a boy's being frightened to death, you would have known it to be a true one, if you possessed any knowledge of the annals of the vicinity. In like manner, the project they were getting up to frighten Charles Channing, and Charles's unfortunate propensity *to be* frightened, are strictly true.

Master Tod Yorke's account of what had imbued his mind with this fear, was a tolerably correct one. Charley was somewhat troublesome as a young child, fractious, and the wicked nurse girl who attended upon him (I can call her nothing else) had used to dress up frightful figures to terrify him into quietness. She might not have been able to accomplish this without detection, but that Mrs. Channing was at that time debarred from active superintendence of her household. When Charley was about two years old she fell into ill health, and for eighteen months was almost entirely confined to her room. Judith was much engaged with her mistress and with household matters, and the baby, as Charley was still called, was chiefly left to the mercies of the nurse. Not content with frightening him practically, she instilled into his young imagination the most pernicious stories of ghosts, dreams, and such like absurdities. But, foolish as *we* know them to be, they are not the less horrible to a child's vivid

imagination. At two, or three, or four years old, it is eagerly opening to impressions; and things, solemnly related by a mother or a nurse, become impressed upon it almost as with gospel truth. Let the fears once be excited in this terrible way, and not a whole life-time can finally eradicate the evil. I would rather a nurse broke one of my children's limbs, than thus poisoned its fair young mind.

In process of time the girl's work was discovered—discovered by Judith. But the mischief was done. You may wonder that Mrs. Channing should not have been the first to discover it; or that it could have escaped her notice at all, having the child with her often for his early religious instruction; but, one of the worst phases of this state of things is, the shrinking tenacity with which the victim buries the fears within his own breast. He dare not tell his parents; he is taught not; and taught by fear. It may not have been your misfortune to meet with a case of this sort; I hope you never will. Mrs. Channing would observe that the child would often shudder, as with terror, and cling to her in an unaccountable manner; but, having no suspicion of the evil, she attributed it to a sensitive, timid temperament. 'What is it, my little Charley?' she would say. But Charley would

only bury his face all the closer, and keep silence. When Martha—that was the girl's name; not the same Martha who was now living at Lady Augusta's—came for him, he would go with her willingly, cordially. It was not her he feared. On the contrary, he was attached to her; she had taught him to be; and he looked upon her as a protector from those awful ghosts and goblins.

Well, the thing was in time discovered, but the mischief, I say, was done. It could not be eradicated. Charles Channing's judgment and good sense told him that all those bygone terrors were but tricks of that wretched Martha's: but, overcome the fear, he could not. All consideration was shown to him; he was never scolded for it, never ridiculed; his brothers and sisters observed to him entire silence upon the subject—even Annabel: and Mr. and Mrs. Channing had done reasoning lovingly with him now. It is not argument that will avail in a case like this. In the broad light of day, Charley could be very brave; would laugh at such tales with the best of them; but when the dark night came, and he was left alone —if he ever was left alone—then all the old terror rose up again, and his frame would shake, and his skin break out into drops, and he would throw himself on the bed or the floor, and hide his face; afraid of the darkness, and of what he might see

in it. He was as utterly unable to prevent or subdue this fear, as he was to prevent his own breathing. He knew it, in the sunny morning light, to be a foolish fear, entirely without reason: but, in the lonely night, there it came again, and he could not combat it.

Thus it is easy to understand that the very worst subject for a ghost trick to be played upon was Charles Channing. It was, however, going to be done. The defect—for it really is a defect—had never transpired to the College school, who would not have spared their ridicule, or spared Charley. Reared, in that point, under happier auspices, they could have given nothing but utter ridicule to the fear. Chattering Annabel, in her thoughtless communications to Caroline and Fanny Yorke, had not bargained for their reaching the ears of Tod; and Tod, when the report did reach his ears, remembered to have heard the tale before; until then it had escaped his memory.

Charley had got into hot water with some of the boys. Bywater had been owing him a grudge for weeks, on account of Charley's persistent silence touching what he had seen the day the surplice was inked; and now there arose another grudge, on Bywater's score, and also on that of others. There is not space to enter into the particulars of the affair; it is sufficient to say that

some underhand work, touching cribs, came to the knowledge of one of the under-masters—and came to him through Charley Channing.

Not that Charley went open-mouthed, and told; there was nothing of that disreputable character —which the school held in especial dislike—the sneak, about Charles Channing; Charley would have bitten his tongue out first. By an unfortunate accident Charles was pinned by the master, and questioned; and he had no resource but to speak out. In honour, in truth, he could not do otherwise; but, the consequence was—punishment to the boys: and they turned bitter against him. School-boys are not famous for being swayed by the rules of strict justice; and they forgot to remember that in Charles Channing's place they would (at any rate, most of them) have felt bound to do the same. They visited the accident upon him, and were determined—as you have heard them express it in their own phrase—to 'serve him out.'

Leaving this decision to fructify, let us turn to Constance. Lady Augusta Yorke—good-hearted in the main, liberal natured, swayed by every impulse like the wind—had been particularly kind to Constance and Annabel Channing during the absence of their mother. Evening after evening she would insist upon their spending at her house,

Hamish—one of Lady Augusta's lasting favourites, probably from his good looks—being pressed into the visit with them by my lady. Hamish was nothing loth. He had given up indiscriminate evening visiting; and, since the coolness which had arisen in the manner of Mr. Huntley, Hamish did not choose to go much to Mr. Huntley's, where he had been a pretty constant visitor before, and he found his evenings hang somewhat heavily on his hands. Thus Constance saw a good deal of the Earl of Carrick; or, it may be more to the purpose to say, the Earl saw a good deal of her.

For the Earl grew to like her very much indeed. He grew to think that if she would only consent to become his wife, he should be the happiest man in ould Ireland; and one day, impulsive in his actions as was ever Lady Augusta, he told Constance so, in that lady's presence.

Constance—much as we may regret to hear it of her—behaved in by no means a dignified manner. She laughed over it. When brought to understand, which she was some little time doing, that she was actually paid that high compliment, she laughed in the Earl's face. He was as old as her father; and Constance had certainly regarded him much more in the light of a father than a husband.

'I do beg your pardon, Lord Carrick,' she said,

apologetically, 'but I think you must be laughing at me.'

'Laughing at ye!' said the Earl. 'It's not I that would do that. I'd like ye to be Countess of Carrick to-morrow, my dear, if ye can only get over me fifty years and me grey hair. Here's me sister—she knows that I'd like to have ye. It's you that are laughing at me, Miss Constance; at me ould locks.'

'No, indeed, indeed it is not at that,' said Constance, while Lady Augusta sat with an impassive countenance. 'I don't know why I laughed. It so took me by surprise; that was why, I think. Please do not say any more about it, Lord Carrick.'

'Ye could not like me as well as ye like William Yorke? Is that it, child?'

Constance grew crimson. Like him as she liked William Yorke!

'Ye're the nicest girl I have seen since Kathleen Blake,' resumed the straightforward, simple Earl. 'She promised to have me; she said she liked me grey hair better than brown, and me fifty years better than thirty; but, while I was putting the place a bit in order for her, she went and married a young Englishman. Did ye ever see him, Augusta?'—turning to his sister. 'He is a baronet; he came somewhere from these parts.'

Lady Augusta intimated stiffly that she had not

the honour of the baronet's acquaintance. She thought her brother was making a simpleton of himself, and had a great mind to tell him so.

'And since Kathleen Blake went over to the enemy, I have not seen anybody that I'd care to look twice at, till I came here and saw you, Miss Constance.' resumed the Earl. 'And if ye can only get to overlook the natural impediments on me side, and not mind me being poor, I'd be delighted, me dear, if ye'd say the word.'

'You are very kind, very generous, Lord Carrick,' said Constance, in an impulse of feeling; 'but I can only beg you never to ask me such a thing again.'

'Ah! well, child, I see ye're in earnest,' good-naturedly responded the Earl, as he gave it up. 'I was afraid ye'd only laugh at me. I knew I was too old.'

And that was the beginning and the ending of Lord Carrick's wooing. Scarcely worth recording, you will think. But there was a reason for doing so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DECISION.

THE important sixth of October—important to the Helstonleigh college boys—did not rise very genially. On the contrary, it rose rather sloppily. A soaking rain was steadily descending, and the streets presented a continuous scene of puddles. The boys dashed through it umbrellaless (I never saw one of them carry an umbrella in my life, and don't believe the phenomenon ever was seen), their clean surplices on their arms; on their way to attend ten o'clock morning prayers in the cathedral. The day was a holiday from school, but not from morning service. The college bell was beginning to ring out as they entered the schoolroom. Standing in the senior's place, and calling over the roll, was Tom Channing, the acting senior for a few brief hours. Since Gaunt's departure, the previous day, Tom Channing had been the school's head; it lay in the custom of the school for him so to be. Would his place be confirmed? or would he lose it? Tom looked quite flurried with the

suspense. It was not so much the being appointed senior that he thought of, as the disgrace, the humiliation that would be his portion, were he deposed from it. He knew that he deserved the place; that it was his by right; he stood first on the rolls, and he had done nothing whatever to forfeit it. He was the school's best scholar; and —if he was not a perfect model for conduct always —there was this much to be said in his favour, that none of them could boast of being better. The opinion of the school had been veering round for the last few days in favour of Tom. I do not mean that he, personally, was in better odour with it—not at all; the snow-ball, touching Arthur, had gathered strength in the rolling—but in favour of his chances of the seniorship. Not a breath of intimation had the head master given; save that, one day, in complaining to Gaunt of the neglect of a point of discipline in the school, which point was entirely under the control of the senior boy, he had turned to Tom, and said, 'Remember, Channing, it must be observed for the future.' Tom's heart leaped within him as he heard it, and the boys looked inquiringly at the master. But the master had then got his head buried in the deep drawer of his desk, hunting for a lost paper. Unless he had spoken it in forgetful abstraction—which was not improbable—there could be no

doubt that he looked upon Tom as Gaunt's successor. The school so interpreted it, and chose to become, amongst themselves, sullenly rebellious. As to Tom, who was nearly as sanguine in temperament as Hamish, his hopes and his spirits went up to fever heat.

One of the last to tear through the streets, splashing his jacket behind up to the collar, and splashing his surplice, was Harry Huntley. He, like all the rest, took care to be in time that morning. There would have been no necessity for his racing, however, had he not lingered at home, talking. He was running down from his room, whither he had gone again after breakfast, to give the finishing brush to his hair (I can tell you that some of those college gentlemen were dandies, using a pot and a half of bear's-grease a week), when Mr. Huntley's voice was heard, calling him into the breakfast-room.

'Harry,' said he, 'I don't think that I need enjoin you not to suffer your manner to show triumph towards Tom Channing, should you be promoted over him to-day.'

'I sha'nt be, papa. Channing will have the seniorship.'

'How do you know that?'

'Oh, from something Pye let drop. We look upon it that Channing is as good as senior.'

Mr. Huntley remembered the tenor of the private conversation the master had held with him, and believed his son would find himself mistaken, and that he, Harry, would be made senior. That it would be Gerald Yorke, Mr. Huntley did not believe. 'At any rate, Harry, take heed to what I say,' he resumed. 'Be entirely considerate and courteous towards your friend Channing, if you should get it. Do not let me have to blush for my son's ill feeling.'

There was a tone in Mr. Huntley's voice which, to Harry's ears, seemed to intimate that he did not speak without reason. 'Papa, it would not be fair for me to go up over Channing,' he impulsively said.

'No. Comparing your merits together, Channing is the better man of the two.'

Harry laughed. 'He is not worse, at all events. Why are you saying this, papa?'

'Because I fancy that you are more likely to be the successful one than Tom Channing. I wish I may be mistaken. I would rather he had it; for, personally, he has done nothing to forfeit it.'

'If Harry could accept the seniorship and displace Tom Channing, I would not care to call him my brother again,' interrupted Ellen Huntley, with a flashing eye.

'It is not that, Ellen; you girls don't under-

stand things,' retorted Harry. 'If Pye displaces Tom from the seniorship, he does not do it to exalt me; he does it because he won't have him at any price. Were I to turn round like a chivalrous Knight Templar and say I'd not take it, out of regard to my friend Tom, where would be the good? Yorke would get hoisted over me, and I should be laughed at for a duff. But I'll do as you like, papa,' he added, turning to Mr. Huntley. 'If you wish me not to take the honour, I'll resign it in favour of Yorke. I never looked for it to be mine, so it will be no disappointment; I always thought we should have Channing.'

'Your refusing it would do no good to Channing,' said Mr. Huntley. 'And I should have grumbled at you, Harry, had you suffered Yorke to slip over your head. Every one in his own right. All I repeat to you, my boy, is, behave as you ought to Tom Channing. Possibly I may pay the college school a visit this morning.'

Harry opened his eyes to their utmost width.

'You, papa! Whatever for?'

'That is my business,' laughed Mr. Huntley. 'It wants but twenty minutes to ten, Harry.'

Harry, at the hint, bounded into the hall. He caught up his clean surplice, placed there ready for him, and stuck his trencher on his head, when he was laid hold of by Ellen.

'Harry, boy, it's a crying wrong against Tom Channing. Hamish never did it——'

'*Hamish!*' interrupted Harry, with a broad grin. 'A sign who you are thinking of, mademoiselle.'

Mademoiselle turned the colour of the scarlet door-mat. 'You know I meant to say Arthur, stupid boy! It's a crying wrong, Harry, upon Tom Channing. Looking at it in the worst light, *he* has been guilty of nothing to forfeit his right. If you can help him to the seniorship instead of supplanting him, be a brave boy, and do it. God sees all things.'

'I shall be late, as sure as a gun!' impatiently returned Harry. And away he sped through the rain and mud, never slacking speed till he was in the college school-room.

He hung up his trencher, flung his surplice on a bench, and went straight up, with outstretched hand, to Tom Channing, who stood as senior, unfolding the roll. 'Good luck to you, old fellow!' cried he, in a clear voice, that rang through the spacious room. 'I hope, with all my heart, that you'll be in this post for many a day.'

'Thank you, Huntley,' responded Tom. And he proceeded to call over the roll, though his cheek burnt at sundry hisses that came, in subdued tones, from various parts of the room.

Every boy was present. Not a king's scholar but answered to his name; and Tom signed the roll for the first time. 'Channing, acting senior.' Not 'Channing, senior,' yet. It was a whim of Mr. Pye's that on Sundays and saints' days—that is, whenever the king's scholars had to attend service—the senior boy should sign the roll.

Then they put on their surplices: and rather damp surplices some of them were. The boys disdained bags; let the weather be what it might, the surplices, like themselves, went openly through it. Ready in their surplices and trenchers, Tom Channing gave the word of command, and they were on the point of filing out, when a freak took Pierce senior to leave his proper place in the ranks, and walk by the side of Brittle.

'Halt!' said Channing. 'Pierce senior, take your place.'

'I shan't,' returned Pierce. 'Who is to compel me?' he added with a mocking laugh. 'We are without a senior for once.'

'I will,' thundered Tom, his face turning white at the implied sneer, the incipient disobedience. 'I stand here as the school's senior now, whatever I may do later, and I will be obeyed. Return to your proper place.'

There was that in Tom's eye, in Tom's tone, that somehow overawed Mr. Pierce; and he walked

sheepishly to his own place. There was no mistaking that Channing would make a firm senior. The boys proceeded, two and two, decorously through the cloisters, snatching off their trenchers as they entered the college gates. Tom and Huntley walked last, Tom bearing the keys. The choir gained, the two branched off right and left, Huntley placing himself at the head of the boys on the left, or *cantori* side; Tom, assuming his place as acting senior, on the *decani*. When they should sit next in that cathedral would their posts be reversed?

The dean was present: also three canons—Dr. Burrows, who was subdean, Dr. Gardner, and Mr. Mence. The head master chanted, and in the stall next to him sat Gaunt. Gaunt had discarded his surplice with his schoolboy life; but curiosity with regard to the seniorship brought him amongst them again that day. 'I hope you'll keep the place, Channing,' he whispered to him, as he passed the boys to get to his stall. Arthur Channing was at his place at the organ.

Ere eleven o'clock struck, service was over, and the boys marched back again. Not to the schoolroom—into the chapter-house. The examination, which took place once in three years, was there held. It was conducted quite in a formal manner; Mr. Galloway, as chapter clerk, being pre-

sent, to call over the roll. The dean, the three prebendaries who had been at service, the head and other masters of the school, all stood together in the chapter-house; and the king's scholars, wearing their surplices still, were ranged in a circle before them.

The dean took the examination. Dr. Burrows put a question now and then, but the dean chiefly took it. There is neither space nor time to follow it in detail here: and nobody would care to read it, if it were followed. As a whole, the school acquitted itself well, doing credit to its masters: one of the chapter—it was Dr. Gardner, and the only word he spoke throughout—remarked that the head boy was a sound scholar; meaning Tom Channing.

The business over, the dean's words of commendation spoken, then the head master took a step forward and cleared his throat. He addressed himself to the boys exclusively; for, what he had to say, had reference to them and himself alone: it was supposed not to concern the clergy. As to the boys, those of them who were of an excitable temperament looked quite pale with suspense, now the long-expected moment was come. Channing? Huntley? Yorke?—which of the three would it be.

'The praise bestowed upon you, gentlemen, by

the Dean and Chapter has been, if possible, more gratifying to myself than to you. It would be superfluous in me to add a word to the admonition given you by the Very Reverend the Dean, as to your future conduct and scholarly improvement. I can only hope, with him, that they may continue to be such as to afford satisfaction to myself, and to those gentlemen who are associated with me as masters in the collegiate school.'

A pause and a dead silence. The head master cleared his throat again, and went on—

'The retirement of William Gaunt from the school renders the seniorship vacant. I am sorry that circumstances, to which I will not more particularly allude, prevent my bestowing it upon the boy whose name stands first upon the rolls, Thomas Ingram Channing. I regret this the more, that it is not from any personal fault of Channing's that he is passed over; and this fact I beg may be most distinctly understood. Next to Channing's name stands that of Henry Huntley, and to him I award the seniorship. Henry Huntley, you are appointed senior of Helstonleigh collegiate school. Take your place.'

The dead silence was succeeded by a buzz, a murmur, suppressed almost as soon as heard. Tom Channing's face turned scarlet, then became deadly white. It was a cruel blow. Huntley,

with an impetuous step, advanced a few paces, and spoke up bravely, addressing the master.

'I thank you, sir, for the honour you have conferred upon me, but I have no right to it, either by claim or merit. I feel that it is but usurping the place of Channing. Can't you give it to him, please sir, instead of to me?'

The speech, begun formally and grandly enough for a royal president at a public dinner, and ending in its schoolboy fashion, drew a smile from more than one present. 'No,' was all the answer vouchsafed by Mr. Pye, but it was spoken with unmistakable emphasis, and he pointed his finger authoritatively to the place already vacated by Tom Channing. Huntley bowed, and took it; and the next thing seen by the boys was Mr. Galloway altering the roll. He transposed the names of Channing and Huntley.

The boys, bowing to the clergy, filed out, and proceeded to the school-room, the masters following them. Tom Channing was very silent. Huntley was silent. Yorke, feeling mad with everybody, was silent. In short, the whole school was silent. Channing delivered the keys of the school to Huntley; and Mr. Pye, with his own hands, took out the roll and made the alteration in the names. For, the roll belonging to the chapter-house was not, as you may have thought, the every-day roll

of the school-room. 'Take care what you are about, Huntley,' said the master. 'A careless senior never finds favour with me.'

'Very well, sir,' replied Huntley. But he was perfectly conscious, as he spoke, that his chief fault, as senior, would be that of carelessness. And Gaunt, who was standing by, and knew it also, telegraphed a significant look to Huntley. The other masters went up to Huntley, shook hands, and congratulated him, for that was the custom of the school; indeed, it was for that purpose only that the masters had gone into the school-room, where they had, that day, no business. Gaunt followed suit next, in shaking hands and congratulating, and the school afterwards; Gerald Yorke doing his part with a bad grace.

'Thank you all,' said Harry Huntley. 'But it ought to have been Tom Channing.' Poor Tom's feelings, during all this, may be imagined.

The king's scholars were slinging their surplices on their arms to depart, for they had full holiday for the remainder of the day, when they were surprised by the entrance of Mr. Huntley. He went straight up to the head master, nodding pleasantly to the boys, right and left.

'Well, and who is your important senior?' he gaily demanded of the master.

'Henry Huntley.'

Mr. Huntley drew in his lips. 'For another's sake I am sorry to hear it. But I can only express my hope that he will do his duty.'

'I have just been telling him so,' observed the master.

'What brings me here is this, sir,' continued Mr. Huntley to the master. 'Knowing there was a doubt as to which of the three senior boys would be chosen, I wished, should it prove to be my son, to speak a word about the Oxford exhibition, which, I believe, generally accompanies the seniorship It falls due next Easter.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Pye.

'Then allow me to decline it for my son,' replied Mr. Huntley. 'He will not need it; and therefore should not stand in the light of any other boy. I deemed it well, sir, to state this at once.'

'Thank you,' warmly responded the head master. He knew that it was an unselfish, not to say generous, deed.

Mr. Huntley approached Tom Channing. He took his hand; he shook it heartily, with every mark of affection and respect. 'You must not allow this exaltation of Harry to lessen the friendship you and he entertain for each other,' he said, in tones that reached every pair of ears present—and not one but was turned up to listen. 'You

are more deserving of the place than he, and I am deeply sorry for the circumstances which have caused him to supplant you. Never mind, Tom; bear on bravely, lad, and you'll outlive vexation. Continue to be worthy of your noble father; continue to be my son's friend; there is no boy living whom I would so soon he took pattern by, as by you.'

The hot tears rushed into Tom's eyes, and his lip quivered. But that he remembered where he was, he might have lost his self-control. 'Thank you sir,' he answered, in a low tone.

'Whew!' whistled Tod Yorke, as they were going out. 'A fine friend he is! A thief's brother.'

'A thief's brother! A thief's brother!' was the echo.

'But he's not our senior. Ha! ha! that would have been a good joke! He's not our senior!'

And down the steps they clattered, and went splashing home, as they had come, they and their surplices, through the wet streets and the rain.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GHOST.

THE moon was high in the heavens, lighting up the tower of the cathedral, illuminating its pinnacles, glittering through the elm trees, bringing forth into view even the dark old ivy on the prebendal houses. A fair night—all too fair for the game that was going to be played in it.

When the Helstonleigh college boys resolved upon what they were pleased to term a 'lark'—and, to do them justice, they regarded this, their prospective night's work, in no graver light—they carried it out artistically, with a completeness, a skill, worthy of a better cause. Several days had they been hatching this; laying their plans, arranging the details; it would be their own bungling fault if it miscarried. But the college boys were not bunglers.

Stripped of its details, the bare plot was to exhibit a 'ghost' in the cloisters, and to get Charley Channing to pass through them. The seniors knew

nothing of the project. Huntley—it was the day following his promotion—would have stopped it at once, careless as he was. Tom Channing would have stopped it. Gerald Yorke might or might not; but Tod had taken care not to tell Gerald. And Griffin, who was burning to exercise in any way his newly acquired power, would certainly have stopped it. They had been too wise to let it come to the knowledge of the seniors. The most difficult part of the business had been old Ketch; but that was managed.

The moonlight shone peacefully on the Boundaries, and the conspirators were stealing up, by ones and twos, to their place of meeting round the dark trunks of the elm trees. Fine as it was overhead, it was less so under-foot. The previous day, you may remember, had been a wet one, the night had been wet, and also the forepart of the present day. Schoolboys are not particularly given to reticence, and a few more than the original conspirators had been taken into the plot. They were winding up now, in the weird moonlight, for the hour was approaching.

Once more we must pay a visit to Mr. Ketch in his lodge, at his supper hour. Mr. Ketch had changed his hour for that important meal. Growing old with age or with lumbago, he found early rest congenial to his bones, as he informed his

friends: so he supped at seven, and retired betimes. Since the trick played him in the summer, he had taken to have his pint of ale brought to him; deeming it more prudent not to leave his lodge and the keys, to fetch it. This was known to the boys, and it rendered their plans a little more difficult.

Mr. Ketch, I say, sat in his lodge, having locked up the cloisters about an hour before, sneezing and wheezing, for he was suffering from a cold, caught the day previously in the wet. He was spelling over a weekly twopenny newspaper, borrowed from the public-house, by the help of a flaring tallow candle, and a pair of spectacles, of which one glass was out. Cynically severe was he over everything he read, as you know it was in the nature of Mr. Ketch to be. As the three-quarters past six chimed out from the cathedral clock, his door was suddenly opened, and a voice called out 'Beer!' Mr. Ketch's supper ale had arrived.

But the arrival did not give that gentleman pleasure, and he started up in what, but for the respect we bear him, we might call a fury. Dashing his one-eyed glasses on the table, he attacked the man:—

'What d'ye mean with your "beer" at this time o' the evening? It wants a quarter to seven. Haven't you got no ears? haven't you got no

clock at your place? D'ye think I shall take it in now?'

'Well, it just comes to this,' said the man, who was the brewer at the public-house, and made himself useful at odd jobs in his spare time; 'if you don't like to take it in now, you can't have it at all, of my bringing. I be a going up to t'other end of the town, and shan't be back of this side ten.'

Mr. Ketch, with much groaning and grumbling, took the ale and poured it into a jug of his own—a handsome jug, that had been in the wars, and lost its spout and handle—giving back the public-house jug to the man. 'You serve me such a imperant trick again, as to bring my ale a quarter of a hour aforehand, that's all!' snarled he.

The man received the jug, and went off whistling; he had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Ketch and his temper well. That gentleman shut his door with a bang, and proceeded to get out his customary bread and cheese. Not that he had any great love for a bread and cheese supper as a matter of taste: he would very much have preferred something more dainty; only, dainties and Mr. Ketch's pocket did not agree.

'They wants to be took down a notch, that public—sending out a man's supper beer a quarter afore seven, when it ain't ordered to come till

seven strikes. Much they cares if it stops a waiting and a flattening, and gets undrinkable! Be I a slave, that I should be forced to swaller my supper afore my tea have well gone down, just to please them? They have got a sight too much custom, that's what it is.'

He took a slight draught of the offending ale, and was critically surveying the loaf, before applying to it that green-handled knife of his, whose native elegance you have heard of, when a second summons was heard at the door—a very timid one this time.

Mr. Ketch flung down the bread and the knife. 'What's the reason I can't get a meal in quiet? Who is it?'

There was no response to this, save a second faint tapping. 'Come in!' roared out he. 'Pull the string o' the latch.'

But nobody came in, spite of this lucid direction; and the timid tapping, which seemed to proceed from very small knuckles, was repeated again. Mr. Ketch was fain to go, grunting, and open it.

A young damsel of eight or so, in a tattered tippet, and a large bonnet—probably her mother's—stood there, curtseying. 'Please, sir, Mr. Ketch is wanted.'

Mr. Ketch was rather taken aback at this

strange address, and surveyed its messenger in astonishment. 'Who be you? and who wants him?' growled he.

'Please, sir, it's a gentleman as is a waiting at the big green gates,' was the reply, 'Mr. Ketch is to go to him this minute; he told me to come and say so, and if you didn't make haste he should be gone.'

'Can't you speak consistent?' snarled Ketch. 'Who is the gentleman?'

'Please, sir, I think it's the bishop.'

This put Ketch in a fluster. The 'big green gates' could only have reference to the private entrance to the bishop's garden, which entrance his lordship used when attending the cathedral. That the bishop was in Helstonleigh, Ketch knew: he had arrived that day, after a short absence; what on earth could he want with *him?* Never doubting, in his hurry, the genuineness of the message, Ketch pulled his door to, and stepped off, the young messenger having already decamped. The green gates were not one minute's walk from the lodge—though a projecting buttress of the cathedral prevented the one being in sight of the other—and old Ketch gained them, and looked around.

Where was the bishop? The iron gates, the garden, the white stones at his feet, the towering

cathedral aloft, all lay cold and calm in the moonlight, but of human sound or sight there was none. The gates were locked when he came to try them, and he could not see the bishop anywhere.

He was not likely to see him. Stephen Bywater, who took upon himself much of the plot's acting part—of which, to give him his due, he was boldly capable—had been on the watch in the street, near the cathedral, for a messenger that would suit his purpose. Seeing this young damsel hurrying along with a jug in her hand, possibly to buy beer for *her* home supper, he waylaid her.

'Little ninepins, would you like to get threepence?' asked he. 'You shall have it, if you'll carry a message for me close by.

'Little ninepins' had probably never had a whole threepence to herself in her young life: she caught at the tempting suggestion, and Bywater drilled into her his instructions, finding her excessively stupid over the process. Perhaps that was all the better. 'Now mind, you are *not* to say who wants Mr. Ketch, unless he asks,' repeated he for about the fifth time, as she was departing to do the errand. 'If he asks, say you think it's the bishop.'

So she went, and delivered it. But had old Ketch's temper allowed him to go into minute questioning, he might have discovered the trick.

Bywater stealthily followed the child near the lodge, screening himself from observation; and, as soon as old Ketch hobbled out of it, he popped in, snatched the cloister keys from their nail, and deposited a piece of paper, folded as a note, on Ketch's table. Then he made off.

Back came Ketch, after a while. He did not know quite what to make of it, but rather inclined to the opinion that the bishop had not waited for him. 'He might have wanted me to take a errand round to the deanery,' soliloquised he. And this thought had caused him to tarry about the gates, so that he was absent from his lodge quite ten minutes. The first thing he saw, on entering, was the bit of paper on his table. He seized and opened it, grumbling aloud that folks used his house just as they pleased, going in and out without reference to his presence or his absence. The note, written in pencil, purported to be from Joseph Jenkins. It ran as follows:—

'My old father is coming up to our place to-night, to eat a bit of supper, and he says he should like you to join him, which I and Mrs. J. shall be happy if you will, at seven o'clock. It's tripe and onions. Yours,

'J. Jenkins.'

Now, if there was one delicacy, known to this world, more delicious to old Ketch's palate than another, it was tripe, seasoned with plenty of onions. His mouth watered as he read. He was aware that it was—to use the phraseology of Helstonleigh—'tripe night.' On two nights in the week, tripe was sold in the town ready dressed, onions and all. This was one; and Ketch anticipated a glorious treat. In too great a hurry to cast so much as a glance round his lodge (crafty Bywater had been deep), not stopping even to put up the loaf and the cheese and the green-handled knife, only drinking the beer, away hobbled Ketch as fast as his lumbago would allow him, locking safely his door, and not having observed the absence of the keys.

'He ain't a bad sort, that Joe Jenkins,' allowed he, conciliated beyond everything at the prospect the invitation held out, and talking to himself as he limped away towards the street. 'He don't write a bad hand, neither! It's a plain un; not one o' them new-fangled scrawls that you can't read. Him and his wife have held up their heads a cut above me—oh yes, they have, though, for all Joe's humbleness—but the grand folks be a coming to. Old Jenkins has always said we'd have a supper together some night, him and me; I suppose this is it. I wonder what made him take

and have it at Joe's? If Joe don't soon get better nor he have looked lately——'

The first chime of the cathedral clock giving notice of the hour, seven! Old Ketch broke out all in a heat, and tried to hobble along quicker. Seven o'clock! What if, through being late, his share of the tripe and onions should be eaten!

Peering out every now and then from the deep shade, cast by one of the angles of the cathedral, and as swiftly and cautiously drawn back again, was a trencher, apparently watching Ketch. As soon as that functionary was fairly launched on his way, the trencher came out entirely, and went flying at a swift pace round the college to the Boundaries.

It was not worn by Bywater. Bywater, by the help of the filched keys, was safe in the cloisters, absorbed with his companions in the preparations for the grand event of the night. In point of fact, they were getting up Pierce senior. Their precise mode of doing that need not be given. They had requisites in abundance, having disputed amongst themselves which should be at the honour of the contribution, and the result was an over prodigality.

'There's seven!' exclaimed Bywater in an agony, as the clock struck. 'Make haste, Pierce!

the young one was to come out at a quarter past. If you're not ready, it will ruin all.'

'I shall be ready and waiting, if you don't bother,' was the response of Pierce. 'I wonder if old Ketch is safely off?'

'What a stunning fright Ketch would be in, if he came in here and met the ghost!' exclaimed Hurst. 'He'd never think it was anything less than the Old Gentleman come for him.'

A chorus of laughter, which Hurst himself hushed. It would not do for noise to be heard in the cloisters at that hour.

There was nothing to which poor Charley Channing was more sensitive, than to ridicule on the subject of his unhappy failing—the propensity to fear; and there is no failing to which schoolboys are more intolerant. Of moral courage—that is, of courage in the cause of right—Charles had plenty; of physical courage, little. Apart from the misfortune of having had supernatural terror implanted in him in childhood, he would never have been physically brave. Schoolboys cannot understand that this shrinking from danger (I speak of palpable danger), which they call cowardice, nearly always emanates from a superior intellect. Where the mental powers are of a high order, the imagination unusually awakened, danger is sure to be keenly perceived, and sensi-

tively shrunk from. In proportion will be the shrinking dread of ridicule. Charles Channing possessed this dread in a remarkable degree; you may therefore judge how he felt, when he found it mockingly alluded to by Bywater.

On this very day that we are writing of, Bywater caught Charles, and imparted to him in profound confidence an important secret; that a choice few of the boys were about to play old Ketch a trick, obtain the keys, and have a game in the cloisters by moonlight. A place in the play, he said, had been assigned to Charles. Charles hesitated. Not because it might be wrong so to cheat Ketch—Ketch was the common enemy of the boys, of Charley as of the rest—but because he had plenty of lessons to do. This was Bywater's opportunity; he chose to interpret the hesitation differently.

'So you are afraid, Miss Charley! Ho! ho! Do you think the cloisters will be dark? that the moon won't keep the ghosts away? I say! it *can't* be true, what I heard the other day—that you dare not be in the dark, lest ghosts should come and run away with you!'

'Nonsense, Bywater!' returned Charley, changing colour like a conscious girl.

'Well, if you are *not* afraid, you'll come and join us,' sarcastically returned Bywater. 'We

shall have stunning good sport. There'll be about a dozen of us. Rubbish to your lessons! you need not be away from them more than an hour. It won't be *dark*, Miss Channing.'

After this, nothing would have kept Charley away, fearing their ridicule. He promised faithfully to be in the cloisters at a quarter past seven.

Accordingly, the instant tea was over, he got to his lessons; Tom at one side of the table—who had more, in proportion, to do than Charles—he at the other. Thus were they engaged when Hamish entered.

'What sort of a night is it, Hamish?' asked Charles, thinking of the projected night play.

'Fine,' replied Hamish. 'Where are they all?'

'Constance is in the drawing-room, giving Annabel her music lesson. Arthur's there too, I think, copying music.'

The silence was resumed. Hamish stood over the fire in thought. Tom and Charles went on with their studies. 'Oh dear!' presently exclaimed the latter, in a tone of subdued impatience.

Hamish turned his eyes upon him. He thought the bright young face looked unusually weary. 'What is it, Charley, boy?'

'It's this Latin, Hamish. I can't make it come right. And Tom has no time to tell me.'

'Bring the Latin here.'

Charles carried his difficulties to Hamish. 'It won't come right,' repeated he.

'Like Mrs. Dora Copperfield's figures, I expect, that wouldn't add up,' said Hamish, as he cast his eyes over the exercise book. 'Halloa, young gentleman! what's this? You have been cribbing.' He had seen in the past leaves certain exercises so excellently well done as to leave no doubt upon the point.

Charles turned crimson. Cribs were particularly objectionable to Mr. Channing, who had forbidden their use, so far as his sons were concerned. 'I could not help it, Hamish. I used the cribs for about a week. The desk made me.'

'Made you!'

'Well,' confessed Charley, 'there has been a row about the cribbing. The rest had cribbed, and I had not, and somehow, through that, it came out to the second master. He asked me a lot of questions, and I was obliged to tell. It made the desk savage, and they said I must do as they did.'

'Which you complied with! Nice young gentlemen, all of you!'

'Only for five or six days, Hamish. You may see that, if you look. I am doing my lessons on the square, now, as I did before.'

'And don't go off the square again, if you please,

sir,' repeated Hamish, 'or you and I may quarrel. If Mr. Channing is not here, I am.'

'You don't know how tyrannical the college boys are.'

'Don't I!' said Hamish. 'I was a college boy rather longer than you have been yet, Master Charley.'

He sat down to the table and so smoothed Charley's difficulties that the boy soon went on swimmingly, and Hamish left him. 'How do you get on, Tom?' Hamish asked.

'Better than I need,' was Tom's answer, delivered somewhat roughly. 'After the injustice done me yesterday, it does not much matter how I get on.'

Hamish turned himself round to the fire, and said no more, neither attempting to console nor soothe. Charles's ears were listening for the quarter past seven, and, the moment it chimed out, he quitted his work, took his trencher from the hall, and departed, saying nothing to anybody.

He went along whistling, past Dr. Gardner's house, past the deanery; they and the cathedral tower, rising above them, looked grey in the moonlight. He picked up a stone and sent it right into one of the elm trees; some of the birds, disturbed from their roost, flew out, croaking, over his head. In the old days of superstition it might have been

looked upon as an ill omen, coupled with what was to follow. Ah Charley! if you could but foresee what is before you! If Mrs. Channing, from her unconscious, far-off sojourn, could but know what grievous ill is about to overtake her boy!

Poor Charley suspected nothing. He was whistling a merry tune, laughing, boy-like, at the discomfiture of the cawing rooks, and anticipating the stolen game he and his friends were about to enjoy on forbidden ground. Not a boy in the school loved play better than did Master Charles Channing.

A door on the opposite side of the Boundaries was suddenly opened, to give egress to one who sprung out with a bound. It was Gerald Yorke: and Charley congratulated himself that they were on opposite sides; for he had been warned that this escapade was to be kept from the seniors.

At that minute he saw a boy come forth from the cloisters, and softly whistle to him, as if in token that he was being waited for. Charley answered the whistle, and set off to run. Which of the boys it was he could not tell; the outline of the form and the college cap were visible enough in the moonlight; but not the face. When he gained the cloister entrance he could no longer see him, but supposed the boy had preceded him into the cloisters. On went Charley, groping his

way down the narrow passage. 'Where are you?' called out he.

There was no answer. Once in the cloisters, a faint light came in from the open windows overlooking the burial yard. A very faint light, indeed, for the buildings all round it were so high, as almost to shut out a view of the sky: you must go close to the window-frame before you could see it.

'I—s-a-a-y!' roared Charley again, at the top of his voice, 'where are you all? Is nobody here?'

There came neither response nor sign of it. One faint sound certainly did seem to strike upon his ear from behind: it was like the click of a lock being turned. Charley looked sharply round, but all seemed still again. The low, dark, narrow passage was behind him; the dim cloisters were before him; he was standing at the corner formed by the east and south quadrangles, and the pale burial-ground in their midst, with its damp grass and its grave-stones, looked cold and lonesome in the moonlight.

The strange silence—it was not the silence of daylight—struck upon Charles with dismay. 'You fellows, there!' he called out again, in desperation. 'What's the good of playing up this nonsense?'

The tones of his voice died away in the echoes of the cloisters, but of other answer there was none.

At that instant a rook, no doubt one of the birds he had disturbed, came diving down, and flapped its wings across the burial-ground. The sight of something, moving there, nearly startled Charles out of his senses, and the matter was not much mended when he discovered it was only a bird. He turned, and flew down the passage to the entrance quicker than he had come up it; but, instead of passing out, he found the iron gate closed. What could have shut it? There was no wind. And if there had been a wind ever so boisterous, it could scarcely have moved that little low gate, for it opened inwards.

Charles seized it to pull it open. It resisted his efforts. He tried to shake it, but little came of that, for the gate fastened firmly. Bit by bit stole the conviction over his mind that he was locked in.

Then a panic seized him. He was locked in the ghostly cloisters, close to the graves of the dead; on the very spot where, as idle tales went, the monks of bygone ages came out of those recording stones, under his feet, and showed themselves at midnight. Not a step could he take, round the cloisters, but his foot must press those stones. To be locked in the cloisters had been nothing (in this point of view), for brave, grown, sensible men, such as the bishop, Jenkins, and Ketch—and they had been three in company, besides—but for many

a boy it would have been a great deal; and for Charles Channing it was awful.

That he was alone, he never doubted. He believed—as fully as belief, or any other feeling could flash into his horrified mind and find a place in it—that Bywater had decoyed him into the cloisters and left him there, in return for his refusal to disclose what he knew of the suspicions bearing upon the damaged surplice. All the dread terrors of his childhood rose up before him: to say that he was mad in that moment might not be quite correct; but it is certain his mind was not perfectly sane. His whole body, his face, his hair, grew damp in an instant, as does one in mortal agony, and with a smothered cry, which was not like that of a human being, he turned and fled through the cloisters, in the vague hope to find the other gate open.

It may be difficult for some of you to understand this excessive terror, albeit the situation was not a particularly desirable one. A college boy, in these enlightened days, laughs at supernatural tales as the delusions of ignorance in ages past; but for those who have had the misfortune to be imbued in infancy with superstition, as was Charles Channing, the terror exists still, college boys though they may be. He could not have told (had he been collected enough to tell anything) what

his precise dread was, as he flew through the cloisters. None can, at these moments. A sort of bugbear rises up in the mind, and they shrink from it, though they see not what its exact nature may be; but it is a bugbear that can neither be faced nor borne.

Feeling like one about to die; feeling as if death, in that awful moment, might be a boon, rather than the contrary, Charles sped down the east quadrangle, and turned into the north. At the extremity of the north side, forming the angle between it and the west, commenced the narrow passage similar to the one he had just traversed, which led to the west gate of egress. A faint glimmering of the white flagged stones beyond this gate, gave a promise that it was open. A half-uttered sound of thankfulness escaped him, and he sped on.

Ah! but what was that? What was it that he came upon in the middle of the north quadrangle, standing within the niches? A towering white form, with a ghastly face, telling of the dead; a mysterious, supernatural-looking blue flame, lighting it up round about. It came out of the niche, and advanced slowly upon him. An awful cry escaped from his heart, and went ringing up to the roof of the cloisters. Oh! that the dean, sitting in his deanery contiguous to the chapter-house,

could have heard that helpless cry of anguish!—that Dr. Burrows, nearer still, could have heard it and burst forth into the cloisters with the succour of his presence! No, no; there could be no succour for a place that was supposed to be empty and closed.

Back to the locked gate—with perhaps the apparition following him? or forward *past* IT to the open door of egress? Which was it to be? In these moments there can be no reason to guide the course; but there is instinct; and instinct took that ill-fated child to the open door.

How he got past the sight, it is impossible to tell. Had it been right in front of his path, he never would have got past it. But it had made a halt when just beyond the niche, not coming out very far. With his poor hands stretched out, and his breath leaving him, Charles did get by, and made for the door, the ghost bringing up the rear with a yell, while those old cloister-niches, when he was fairly gone, grew alive with moving figures, which came out of their dark corners, and shrieked aloud with laughter.

Away, he knew not whither—away, like one who is being pursued by an unearthly phantom—deep catchings of the breath, as will follow undue bodily exertion, telling of something not right within; wild, low, abrupt sounds breaking from

him at intervals—thus he flew, turning to the left, which took him towards the river. Anywhere from the dreaded cloisters; anywhere from the old, grey, ghostly edifice; anywhere in his dread and agony. He dashed past the boat-house, down the steps, turning on to the river pathway, and——

Whether the light, hanging at the boat-house, deceived his sight—whether the slippery mud caused him to lose his footing—whether he was running too quickly and could not stop himself in time—or whether, in his irrepressible fear, he threw himself unconsciously in, to escape what might be behind him, will never be known. Certain it is, the unhappy boy went, plunge, into the river, another and a last wild cry escaping him as the waters closed over his head.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. KETCH'S EVENING VISIT.

It were surely a breach of politeness on our part not to attend Mr. Ketch in his impromptu evening visit! He shuffled along at the very top of his speed, his mouth watering all the way, while the delicious odour of the tripe and onions appeared to be borne on the air to his olfactory nerves: so powerful is the force of fancy. Arrived at his destination, he found the shop closed. It was Mrs. Jenkins' custom to close at seven from October to April, inclusive; and the shutters had now just been put up. Mr. Ketch seized the knocker on the shop-door—there was no other entrance to the house—and brought it down with a force that shook the first-floor sitting-room, and startled Mr. Harper, the lay clerk, nearly out of his arm-chair, as he sat before the fire. Mrs. Jenkins' maid, a young person of seventeen, very much given to blacking her face, opened it.

'Be I in time?' demanded Ketch, his voice all in a shake.

'In time for what?' responded the girl.

'Why, for supper,' said Ketch, penetrating into the shop, which was lighted by a candle that stood on the counter, the one the girl had brought in her hand. 'Is old Jenkins the bedesman come yet?'

'Old Jenkins ain't here,' said she. 'You'd better go into the parlour, if you be come to supper.'

Ketch went down the shop, sniffing curiously. Sharp as fancy is, he could not say that his nose was yet regaled with the scent of the onions, but he supposed the saucepan-lid might be on. For, as was known to Mr. Ketch, and to other of the initiated in tripe mysteries, it was generally deemed advisable, by good housewives, to give the tripe a boil up at home, lest it should have got cold in its transit from the vendor's. The girl threw open the door of the small parlour, and told him he might sit down if he liked; she did not overburthen the gentleman with civility. 'Missis 'll be here soon,' said she.

Ketch entered the parlour, and sat down. There was a fire in the grate, but no light, and there were not, so far as Ketch could see, any preparations yet for the entertainment. 'They be a going to have it downstairs in the kitchen,' soliloquised he. 'And that's a sight more comfortabler. She's gone out to fetch it, I shouldn't

wonder!' he continued, alluding to Mrs. Jenkins, and sniffing again strongly, but obtaining no result. 'That's right! she won't let 'em serve her with short onions, she won't; she have got a tongue of her own. I wonder how much beer there'll be!'

He sat on pretty patiently, for him, about half an hour, sniffing incessantly, and then he took the liberty of replenishing the fire from a coal-box that stood there. Another quarter of an hour was passed much more impatiently, when Ketch began to grow uneasy and lose himself in all sorts of grave conjectures. Could she have arrived too late at the tripe-shop, and found the tripe all sold, and so had stopped out to supper somewhere herself? Such a thing as a run on the delicacy had occurred more than once, to Ketch's certain knowledge, and tardy customers had been sent away disappointed, to wait in longing anticipations for the next tripe night. He went into a cold perspiration at the bare idea; almost like another had done that night in the cloisters, in his terrible agony. And where was old Jenkins, all this time, that he had not come? And where was Joe? A pretty thing to invite a gentleman out to a hasty supper, and serve him in this way! What could they mean by it?

He groped his way round the corner of the shop to where lay the kitchen stairs, whose position he

pretty well knew, and called down them :—'Here, Sally, Betty—whatever your name is—ain't there nobody at home?'

The girl heard, and came forth, the same candle in her hand. 'Who be you a calling to, I'd like to know? My name's Lidyar, if you please.'

'Where's your missis?' responded Ketch, suffering the matter of the name to drop into abeyance. 'Is she gone out for the tripe?'

'Gone out for what tripe?' asked the girl. 'What be you a talking of?'

'The tripe for supper,' said Ketch.

'There ain't no tripe for supper,' replied she.

'There is tripe for supper,' persisted Ketch. 'And me and old Jenkins is a going to have some of it. There's tripe and onions.'

The girl shook her head. 'I dun know nothing about it. Missis is upstairs, a fixing the mustard.'

Oh come! this gave a promise of something. Old Ketch thought mustard the greatest condiment that tripe could be accompanied by, in conjunction with onions. But she must have been a long while 'fixing' the mustard; whatever that might mean. And where was the tripe? His spirits dropped again, and he grew rather exasperated. 'Go up and ask your missis how long I be to wait?' he growled. 'I was told to come here at seven for supper, and now it's a'most eight.'

The girl, feeling possibly a little curiosity herself, came up with her candle. 'Master ain't so well to-night,' remarked she. 'He's gone to bed, and missis is a putting him a plaster on his chest.'

The words fell on old Ketch like ice. 'A mustard-plaster?' shrieked he.

'What else but a mustard-plaster!' she retorted. 'Did you think it was a pitch? There's a fire lighted up yonder in his room grate, and she's a making of it there.'

Nothing more sure. Poor Jenkins, who had coughed more than usual the last two days, perhaps from the wet weather, and whose chest in consequence was very painful, had been ordered to bed this night by his wife when tea was over; going up herself, as soon as her shop was shut, to administer a mustard-plaster. Ketch was quite stunned with uncertainty. A man in bed, with a plaster to his chest, was not likely to invite company to supper.

Before he had seen his way out of the shock, or the girl had done staring at him, Mrs. Jenkins descended the stairs and joined them, having been attracted by the noise. She had slipped on an old buff dressing-gown over her clothes, in her capacity of nurse, and looked rather in dishabille; certainly not like a lady who is about to give an entertainment.

'He says he's come to supper: tripe and onions,' said the girl, introducing Mr. Ketch and the subject unceremoniously to her wondering mistress.

Mrs. Jenkins, not much more famous for meekness in expressing her opinions than was Ketch, turned her gaze upon that gentleman. '*What* do you say you have come for?' asked she.

'Why, I have come for supper, that's what I have come for,' shrieked Ketch, all in a tremble. 'Jenkins invited me to supper, off tripe and onions, and I'd like to know what it all means, and where the supper is.'

'You are going into your dotage,' said Mrs. Jenkins, with an amount of scorn so great that it exasperated Ketch as much as the words themselves. 'You'll be wanting a lunatic asylum next. Tripe and onions! If Jenkins was to hint at such a thing as a plate of tripe coming inside my house, I'd tripe him. There's nothing I have such a hatred to as tripe; and he knows it.'

'Is this the way to treat a man?' foamed Ketch, his disappointment and his hunger driving him nearly into the state hinted at by Mrs. Jenkins. 'Joe Jenkins takes and sends me down a note a hour ago, to come here to supper with his old father, which it was to be tripe and onions! It *is* tripe night!' continued he, rather wandering from

the point of argument, as the tears filled his eyes. 'You can't deny as it's tripe night.'

'Here, Lydia, open the door and let him out,' cried Mrs. Jenkins, waving her hand imperatively towards it. 'And what have you been at with your face again?' continued she, as the candle held by that damsel, reflected its light aloft. 'One can't see it for colly! if I *do* put you into the mask I have threatened, you won't like it, girl. Hold your tongue, old Ketch, or I'll call Mr. Harper down to you. Write a note! What else? He has wrote no note; he has been too suffering the last few hours to think of notes, or of you either. You *are* a lunatic, it's my belief.'

'I shall be drove one,' sobbed Ketch. 'I was promised a treat of tripe and onions——'

'Is that door open, Lydia? There! Take yourself and your tripe and onions off. My goodness me! disturbing my house with such a crazy errand!' And, taking old Ketch by the shoulders, who was rather feeble and tottery, from his lumbago and his age, Mrs. Jenkins politely marshalled him outside, and closed the door upon him.

'Insolent old fellow!' she exclaimed to her husband, to whom she went at once and related the occurrence. 'I wonder what he'll pretend he has next from you? A note of invitation, indeed!'

'My dear,' said Jenkins, revolving the news,

and speaking as well as his sore chest would allow him, 'it must have been a trick played him by the young college gentlemen. We should not be too hard upon the poor old man. He's not very agreeable or pleasant-tempered, I'm afraid it must be allowed, but—I'd not have sent him away without a bit of supper, my dear.'

'I daresay you'd not,' retorted Mrs. Jenkins. 'All the world knows you are soft enough for anything. I have sent him away with a flea in his ear; that's what I have done.'

Mr. Ketch had at length come to the same conclusion—that the invitation must be the work of the college gentlemen. Only fancy the unhappy man, standing outside Mrs. Jenkins's inhospitable door! Deceived, betrayed, fainting for his supper, done out of the delicious tripe and onions, done out even of his own bread and cheese, and, so to say, of his beer, for that was gone, he leaned against the shutters, and gave vent to a prolonged and piteous howl. It might have drawn tears from a stone.

In a frame of mind that was not enviable, he turned his steps homeward, clasping his hands upon his empty, ill-treated stomach, and vowing the most intense vengeance upon the college boys. The occurrence naturally caused him to cast back his thoughts to the other trick—the locking him

in the cloisters, in which Jenkins had been a fellow-victim—and he doubled his fists in impotent anger. 'This comes of their not having been flogged for that!' he groaned.

Engaged in these reflections of gall and bitterness, old Ketch gained his lodge, unlocked it, and entered. No wonder that he turned his eyes upon the cloister keys, the reminiscence being so strong within him.

But, to say he turned his eyes upon the cloister keys, is but a figure of speech. No keys were there. Ketch stood like a transfixed statue, and stared as hard as the flickering blaze from his dying fire would allow him. Seizing a match-box, he struck a light and held it to the hook. The keys were *not* there.

Ketch was no conjuror, and it never occurred to him to suspect that the keys had been removed before his own departure. 'How had them wicked ones got in?' he foamed. 'Had they forced his winder?—had they took a skeleton key to his door?—had they come down the chimbley? They was capable of all three exploits; and the more soot they collected about 'em in the descent, the better they'd like it. He didn't think they'd mind a little fire. It was that insolent Bywater! —or that young villain, Tod Yorke!—or that undaunted Tom Channing!—or perhaps the

three leagued together! Nothing wouldn't tame *them*.'

He examined the window; he examined the door; he cast a glance up the chimney. Nothing, however, appeared to have been touched or disturbed, and there was no soot on the floor. Cutting off a piece of bread and cheese, groaning at it for its dryness, and eating it as he went, he proceeded out again, locking up his lodge as before.

Of course he bent his steps to the cloisters, going to the west gate. And there, perhaps to his surprise, perhaps not, he found the gate locked, just as he might have left it himself that very evening, and the keys hanging ingeniously, by means of the string, from one of the studded nails, right over the keyhole.

'There ain't a boy in the school but what'll come to be hung!' danced old Ketch in his rage.

He would have preferred not to find the keys; but to go to the head-master with a story of their loss—their theft. It was possible, it was just possible that, going, keys in hand, the master might refuse to give credence to his tale.

Away he hobbled, and arrived at the house of the head-master. Check the first!—The master was not at home. He had gone to a dinner-party. The other masters lived at a distance, and Ketch's old legs were aching. What was he to do? Make

his complaint to somebody, he was determined upon. The new senior, Huntley, lived too far off for his lumbago; so he turned his steps to the next senior's, Tom Channing, and demanded to see him.

Tom heard the story, which was given him in detail. He told Ketch—and with truth—that he knew nothing about it, but would make inquiries in the morning. Ketch was fain to depart, and Tom returned to the sitting-room, and threw himself in a chair in a burst of laughter.

'What is the matter?' they asked.

'The primest lark,' returned Tom. 'Some of the fellows have been sending Ketch an invitation to sup at Jenkins's off tripe and onions, and when he got there he found it was a hoax, and Mrs. Jenkins turned him out again. That's what Master Charley must have gone after.'

Hamish turned round. 'Where *is* Charley, by the way?'

'Gone after it, there's no doubt,' replied Tom. 'Here's his exercise, not finished yet, and his pen left inside the book. Oh yes; that's where he has gone!'

END OF VOL. II.

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